

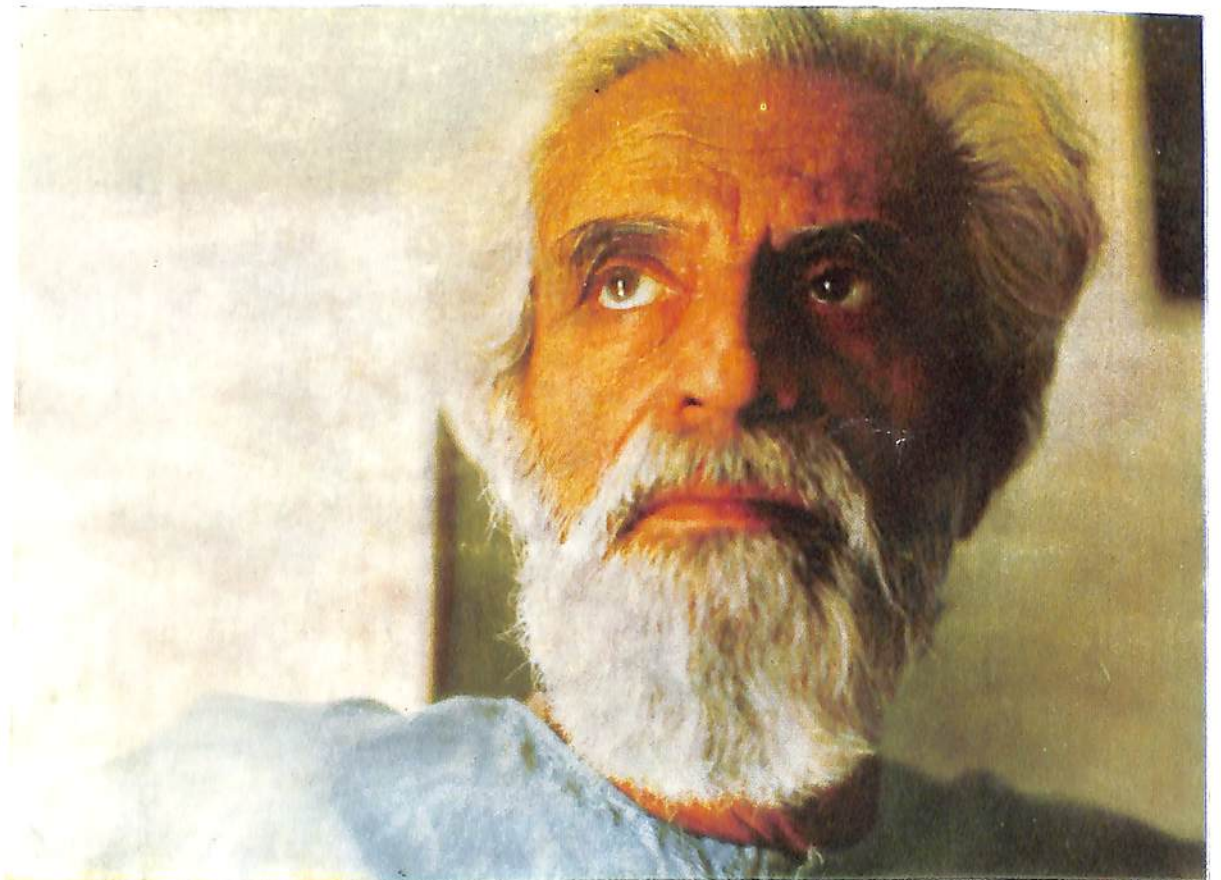
KALĀ DARSHAN

The Complete Magazine on Indian Arts & Culture





कर्मण्येवाधिकारस्ते मा फलेषु कदाचन ।
मा कर्मफलहेतुर्भूर्मा ते सङ्गोऽस्त्वकर्मणि ॥



← TRIUMPH OF LABOUR
by D.P. Roy Choudhury

*Presented with best compliments
and profound regards to my
teacher in early Jodhpur Shi
Shyama Lal Sastri.*

*Manohar Kaul
27/2/88*

KALĀ DARSHAN

The Complete Magazine on Indian Arts & Culture

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Designed and Edited
by
MANOHAR KAUL

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SUBHASH BAGUL

Kaul

← MANOHAR KAUL

Editor, Kala Darshan, invites contributions from scholars on Visual Arts and practicing artists, Performing Arts including writeups on leading personalities and young promising dancers, musicians and theatre artists, exposure of hidden Indian art treasures in Museums in India and abroad, Creative Photography including articles on contemporary trends in this art form and leading photographers, Indian Literature including folk lore and write-ups on language literature and the noted litterateurs, (English medium), Folk and Tribal Arts and Crafts and on all aspects of Indian Thought and Culture.

Articles on new art movements emerging from time to time the world over in various disciplines will also have due place in Kala Darshan.

The readers of Kala Darshan are welcome to express their opinions relating to this journal; the writeups will be subjected to editing if published.

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Unsolicited material would be welcome but Editor would not take any responsibility for the same. In case the material is to be returned, postage should be sent alongwith the writeups etc.

All correspondence be sent to Editor, Kala Darshan at his residence at 89A, Pocket C, Mayur Vihar, Phase II, Delhi-110091 for safe delivery of mail.

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Welcome response to launching of 'Kala Darshan'

I am happy to learn about your laudable venture to publish a quarterly on visual and performing arts.

I know so well, you have been always an ardent and a devoted promoter of fine arts and has been associated with many art organisations in that regard.

Since you are courageous and believe in utmost dedication, I feel, success of this new project, should be a reality very soon.

J. Sultan Ali
Madras

I am reassured that you are taking up an illustrated quarterly with a comprehensive outlook of the creative arts....I sincerely hope that your venture will surmount all the hurdles always put in the way of visionary programmes by the pragmatists.

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand
Bombay

I am delighted that you are launching a new magazine. Please accept my best wishes. I look forward to the pleasure of hearing from you. Meanwhile my good wishes and regards.

Dr. B.N. Goswamy
Chandigarh

I welcome your idea of bringing out a good journal devoted to the arts.

Dr. A.S. Raman
Madras

I thank you for your letter informing me of your bringing out an illustrated quarterly. I wish your efforts every success.

K.K. Hebbar
Bombay

I am happy to know about the new journal which appears to be a very promising venture.

Dr. M.K. Naik
Bombay

Please accept my heartiest congratulations and good wishes for taking up a challenging task to bring out a quarterly magazine on art. We are looking forward for a constructive role to be played by a person like you in the context of impartial historicity and criticism of Contemporary and Modern Indian Art.

Dr. Anis Farooqi
New Delhi

I am glad to learn that you are starting a quarterly journal exclusively devoted to the arts and culture; the first of its kind in our country. I have every reason to believe that under your stewardship the journal will be much sought after one.

T. Kasi Nath
New Delhi

I send you my most sincere good wishes in your venture to remove the vacuum in worthwhile literature and publication on Arts and Culture.

Prof. B.C. Sanyal
New Delhi

I am exceedingly happy to know that you are launching a project for publishing Kala Darshan much sought for magazine on contemporary and traditional art and culture of India. This is a step in the right direction and I offer my support in all possible respects that you may need from this region. I once again assure you all my cooperation and encouragement for this laudable enterprise.

Anil Kumar Mukherjee
Patna

I am very happy to receive your letter and pleasantly surprised. I admire your enthusiasm and deep involvement even at this age for taking up this project 'Kala Darshan'; I wish you a great success. If there is anything I can do within my limitations, I shall be very happy to extend my cooperation.

Prof. K.S. Kulkarni
New Delhi

I wish all success to your enterprise which is indeed timely and Important.

Dr. Prem Kirpal
New Delhi

'Kala Darshan'—the complete magazine on Indian Arts and Culture, as you visualise it, sounds attractive, and would be a much needed journal; you can be rest assured of my cooperation.

Smt. Susheela Misra
Lucknow

Your objectives are laudable and I wish you every success. But, I also know the hurdles you will have to

overcome as Editor of a forward looking journal.

Dr. G. Thomas
Bangalore

I have just received your letter and am delighted to have it. Certainly you have my blessings on this venture and whatever cooperation I am able to give.

Dr. Swamy Gitanand Giri
Ananda Ashram, Pondicherry

Pleased to know that you are coming out with a new magazine, 'Kala Darshan'. There is a need of such a magazine for the art lovers. I wish you all success in your new endeavour and if I can do any service to you, I would be available for this good cause.

Dr. M.P. Chhaya
New Delhi

I am pleased to know that you are planning to edit and publish an art magazine. It is good news. Really we all artists need such type of art journals by which we can shorten the distance among artist and art lovers. Actually our field is behind only because we don't have more writers and magazines to create art consciousness in the country.

Gopal Adivrekar
Bombay

It is indeed very creditable that you are bringing out this magazine with your own financial and other resources. I shall be very happy to be of help to you in your very laudable venture.

V.N. Misra
Pune

It is not an easy task to step into this venture but men with determination can make a success of anything that they are called upon to do. I send my best wishes to you; may God grant you great success in this venture. I assure you of my cooperation always; may your Kala Darshan be the beacon light for all the art lovers of the country and give them the right *marg Darshan*.

H.S. Dilgir
Chandigarh

Accept our hearty congratulations for starting the magazine. May this endeavour of yours fulfil our cherished desire of serving the cause of art and may open new avenues for the coming generation in the domain of fine arts—is our constant prayer.

Prof. Ranvir Saxena and Dr. Sarla Raman
Dehradun

Congratulations for starting 'Kala Darshan'. It is a great venture and India needed a journal like this.

Col. Narendrapal Singh
New Delhi

Congratulations on your starting a new magazine on Indian Arts and Culture.

Tara Ali Beg
New Delhi

It is a laudable venture you have undertaken and I sincerely pray that your venture may turn out to be a successful one.

Dr. Dwarakanath H. Kabadi
Bangalore

I am pleased to learn that you are starting an illustrated quarterly devoted to visual and performing arts. While wishing you all success in your new venture, I assure you of my full cooperation.

B.D. Garga
Bombay

I am happy that you have decided to start 'Kala Darshan' inspite of odds. The country badly needs a magazine for projecting composite and integrated picture of creative achievements in the field of performing and visual arts.

Hari Uppal
Patna

I am glad that you are receiving all encouragement and cooperation. A man of your stature in the world of art and dedication to its cause is rare to find.

Dr. Rajindra Prasad
Patna

A journal of this kind would fulfil a long-felt need; and I am looking forward to receiving the first issue.

Prof Kirti Trivedi
Bombay

I am extremely happy to know that you are going to edit a new journal on Arts and Culture, 'Kala Darshan'.

Prof. Indra Nath Choudhary
New Delhi

Yes, the world of art would certainly become more enriched with such enlightened and academic-oriented ventures like this. Once again wishing you all success in your noble endeavour and assuring you of my fullest cooperation in this regard.

Dr. (Mrs) P. Hema Govindarajan
Bangalore

The venture is no doubt highly challenging but if you manage to overcome initial difficulties, the journal, as I could visualise, has a great future. However, I wish you a grand success to achieve your mission.

Dr. Sansar Chandra
Chandigarh

KALA DARSHAN

Kala Darshan

At the outset, I wish you all a happy, creative and a constructive New Year; let there be 'PEACE within and without'.

It gives me great pleasure in presenting the first issue of 'Kala Darshan'—a modest effort—to the people in India and the world over. This has been possible with the cooperation of scholars who readily agreed to contribute to the Magazine; for arts purify, cleanse and uplift the human spirit: to see good and to do good at a moment when the whole world is witnessing the unusual phenomenon of non-culture and non-humanity in the so-called civilised species.

India has a great and glorious cultural past of which all of us are proud. The contemporary artists in all disciplines are at present deep in a tremendous creative process, with all the added vigour of a new vision. The Indian art scene today is essentially in a healthy state due to our artist's innovative spirit and exposure to new art movements emerging from all over the globe. The Indian mind has always been receptive to alien influences, which it absorbed and assimilated, turning them into the characteristic forms of its own being—thus vitalising and enriching its culture without loss of individuality or its moorings. The capacity of the Indian people for toleration has been proverbial; keeping Indian culture and civilisation alive during the last five millenniums.

After Independence, the encouragement that the arts and culture received was as striking as that in education, science and technology. In the field of the fine arts the voluntary efforts of the artists were seen complimented by those of the leadership and the Akademis set up at the Centre and in the States. Today Indian artists are not content merely with the achievements of our past society but are ardently intent to make these flourish free of all restraints throughout the length and breadth of the land. The setting up of Zonal Cultural Centres in the country is bound to help in this creative activity further, and indeed, in establishing a unified cultural ethos.

The main aim of launching 'Kala Darshan' is to bring all these creative endeavours into focus to enable people to get a first hand feel of the great work Indian artists in all their respective fields have been accomplishing from time to time. The other important objective has been to present an integrated and composite picture of the entire creative process under one cover.

It is hoped, that the readers of 'Kala Darshan' will enjoy the presentation. It has been a stupendous task and I enjoyed every moment in editing and working for the magazine despite many odds. I assure them, that, with their cooperation and good wishes, which I have received in abundance, I shall endeavour my best to improve this magazine both in content and presentation.

Besides many friends and well wishers, I thank especially Keshav Malik, B. Vithal, G.R. Santosh, S.R. Bhusan, R.P. Nigam, Jagmohan Chopra and J. Sultan Ali for helping me in manifold ways and for taking keen interest in the venture.

Last but not the least, I am thankful to Shri Narain Das of the Indraprastha Press for his unstinted cooperation in producing the magazine with love and care and to my entire satisfaction.

Manohar Kaul

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ALL INDIA FINE ARTS & CRAFTS SOCIETY

DIAMOND JUBILEE YEAR 1987-1988

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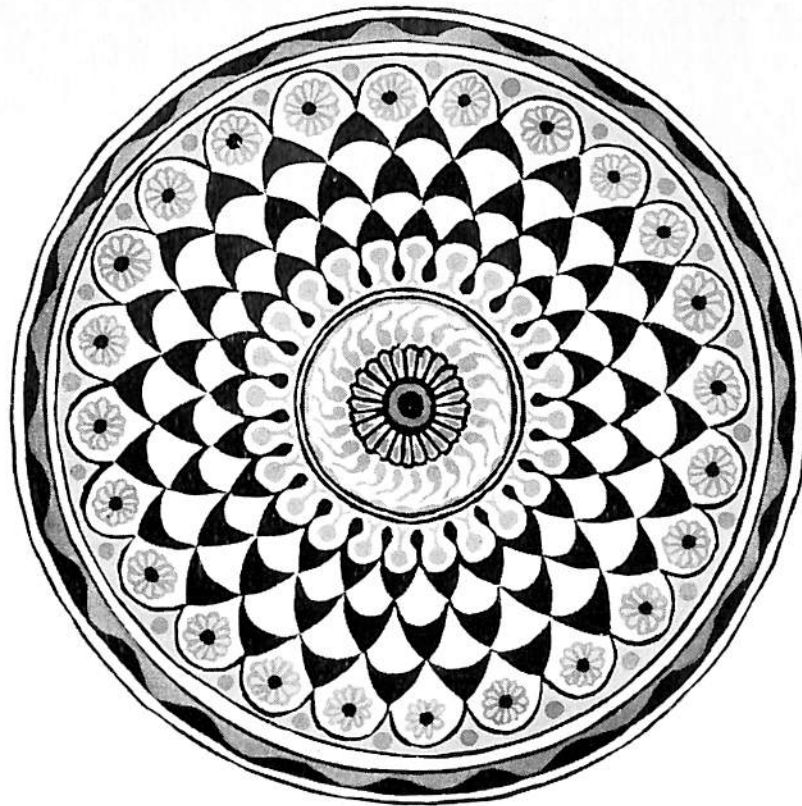
SCHEDULE OF MAJOR ACTIVITIES

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| 1. Prof. Kamal Sen's Representative show at Delhi and Chandigarh | October-November 1987 |
| 2. Retrospective show of R.S. Bhatnagar | 26th Nov.—December 7, 1987 |
| 3. French Photo Exhibition | Dec. 10-15 1987 |
| 4. All India Drawing Exhibition : 'Drawings '87' Awards : Rs. 17,000/- | 17th Dec. to 27th Dec. 1987 |
| 5. Retrospective exhibition of Shri Bimal Dasgupta, eminent artist of India & Vice President, AIFACS. | 23rd Dec. to 2nd January, 1988 |
| 6. IInd International Women's Art Exhibition | 31st Dec. 1987 to 9th Jan. 1988 |
| 7. Drawings Exhibition of well-known artist—Deana Pather Bridge of U.K. | 10th Jan. to 22nd Jan. 1988 |
| 8. Diamond Jubilee All India Art Exhibition
Rs. 44,000/- cash awards & President of India's Silver Plaque for the best exhibit of the year | 24th Jan. to 2nd Feb. 1988 |
| 9. All India Sculptors Camp. | 24th Jan. to 2nd Feb. 1988 |
| 10. All India Paintings Camp. | 24th Jan. to 2nd Feb. 1988 |
| 11. All India Graphics Camp. | 24th Jan. to 2nd Feb. 1988 |
| 12. Ceylonese Photo Exhibition | 3rd Feb. to 5th Feb. 1988 |
| 13. 7th All India Water Colour Exhibition. Rs. 11,000/- cash awards | 4th Feb. to 10th Feb. 1988 |
| 14. 5th All India Traditional Art Exhibition. Rs. 11,000/- cash awards | 4th Feb. to 10th Feb. 1988 |
| 15. 3rd All India Veteran Artists Exhibition | 12th Feb. to 18th Feb. 1988 |
| 16. Veteran Artists honouring function.
(The Society would honour about 100 veteran artists, above the age of 60 years, from different parts of the country and would be given a token sum of Rs. 501/- a silver plaque and a shawl.
The honouring function will be followed by a Social Dinner in their honour
Total expenditure on the project would come to about Rs. 1,50,000/-. | 12th Feb. 1988 |
| 17. All India Dance, Drama & Music Festival | Feb. 12th to 18th |
| 18. 10th International Contemporary Art Exhibition (1st International Photo Exhibition
Rs. 17,000/- cash awards | Feb. 20th to 28th 1988 |
| 19. 11th International Contemporary Art Exhibition
(3rd International Graphic Art Exhibition) Rs. 17,000/- cash awards | 2nd March to 11th March, 1988 |
| 20. International Art Film Festival | 2nd March to 11th March, 1988 |
| 21. 5th All India Ceramics Art Exhibition
Awards : Rs. 7,000/- Purchase of Pottery pieces for donation to galleries & museums
Rs. 5,000/- | 24th April to 30th April, 1988 |
| 22. Indian Paintings & Ceramics Exhibition in London | 10th Sept. to 30th Sept. 1988 |

S.S. BHAGAT
Secretary

KALA DARSHAN

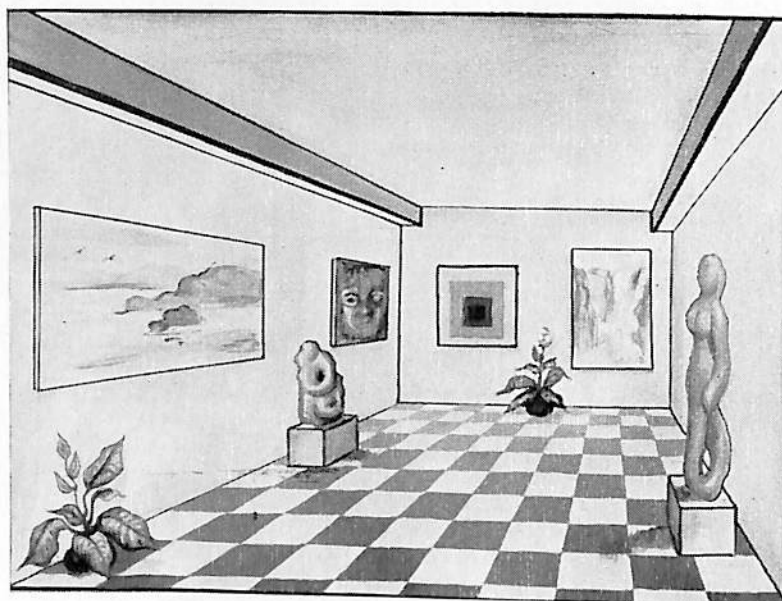
Visual Arts



**There are not only aesthetic values, but life-values,
mind-values, soul-values that enter into art.**

—Sri Aurobindo

CMC Sets up New Art Gallery at Delhi



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CMC supported and promoted arts and artists right from its inception; has collected a large number of paintings, sculptures and handicrafts over the last ten years adorning its offices all over the country and has held 3 Art Camps in Bombay, Delhi and Calcutta.

To support the cause of arts and artists more effectively CMC has established an Art Gallery at its Corporate Office at Maharani Bagh, New Delhi which will be inaugurated on February 6, 1988. An exhibition of the selected works from CMC's Art Collection will be on display. The exhibition will be open till February 15 daily from 10 am to 7 pm.

Later upcoming and other artists will be invited to hold exhibitions at the Gallery. Administrative support will be provided by CMC. It is planning to hold six to seven such exhibitions in a year.

We expect a good response to this creative venture.

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'Creation Should be Like the First Creation —A Need of Man's Soul'

—MULK RAJ ANAND



Mulk Raj Anand—Sketch by Hebbar

Dr. Mulk Raj Anand has been made Laureate by the International Philosophy of Art Institute; this paper will be read by him at the actual ceremony.

—Editor

I HAVE come to the appreciation of the creative arts, without taking a degree of any kind, in aesthetic theories or art history, through devious, unrespectable, even disreputable routes, from the compulsion to take creative initiatives, because without them I would have lapsed into total insignificance in my own eyes.

As is not known, I come from a modest craft family of Amritsar, which enjoyed patronage from the Pahari Rajas of Nadaun, Chamba and Suket, in Kangra valley of the Himalayas mainly for the making of silver and copper utensils, thrones, bugles, bronze figurines, and other sundry metal objects. I was early apprenticed to silversmithy under my uncle, and learnt to make silver vessels. My father, who had joined the British-Indian army, wanted me to be a clerk of some kind, and I went through the Punjab University. But I was able to maintain my contacts with the craftworld, through occasional tours in the Kangra valley and Kashmir and I spent vacations in learning to copy miniatures from perforated sheets of figure drawings, as well as some paintings from a set of pictures which the Nadaun family gave to my uncle as a present.

The bundle ultimately went to Ananda Coomaraswamy through a friend of my family, a medical practitioner in London, Dr. Paira Mal, and I got to know the savant through the usual recommendation method of Indians, when the physician introduced me to the great man with an epistle.

Later, I met Dr. Coomaraswamy at the house of the Craftsman-Sculptor Eric Gill, in Pigotts,

Buckinghamshire, U.K. The impact of this meeting was spontaneous. I went through a kind of conversion. Because, on my arrival in London, in the early twenties, I had been swept off my feet by the latter day aesthetic adventures of Clive Bell in his book *Art*, which exalted 'significant form' as the basis of all appreciation of paintings and sculptures.

Coomaraswamy, who had grown up as a student of science in London, and through the nineties movements, and seen the art for art's sake movement of Whistler, Pater and Oscar Wilde peter out, sympathised with Ruskin and Morris. In fact, he had himself turned craftsman, by installing a handpress in his country home, printing his own first books, and he interested himself in the return to the guild system of the pre-renaissance Christian world.

Along with Eric Gill, Coomaraswamy, told me, during a decisive hour, to go beyond the *petit bourgeois* Bloomsbury gossip about what was on in the Art Galleries in Bond Street, Mayfair and Leicester Square. He taught me to recognise my *Avidya*, ignorance, about the Hindu attitude to Art. He said 'Goodness and Truth and Beauty' mean the same thing in Indian thought, *Satyam, Sivam Sundaram*. And there is no fragmentation of the mind in our tradition.

'Look after Goodness and Truth', insisted Eric Gill, 'and Beauty will take care of itself!'

I impetuously asked Coomaraswamy whether he would guide me, if I decide to write on Hindu View of Art, and he asked me to study his two essays on this theme in the *Dance of Shiva* and amplify them into a book.

In the process of my research, I found that what I had thought of as a conversion in myself was not quite a transformation.

Still living in Bloomsbury, both physically and mentally, in touch with Clive Bell, Roger Fry and their circle, the quarrels of the schools could not be bypassed. I was confused and in a very divided state of mind.

It was quite clear that if Walter Pater had turned from aestheticism, to Plato, Hegel and Schelling and condescended to read Ruskin, I must certainly persist in the study of aesthetic theories, but also see as much of the world art as possible.

The study of aesthetic theories could, I then believed, and still believe, account for the phenomena of creative expression, and enable one to understand 'art experience' more intensely. The interplay between the sense of wonder about all phenomena, whether it is planetary movements, and the distance of thousands of light years between stars in interstellar space, or Leonardo's *Mona Lisa*, or a Mondrian abstract, challenge comprehension, explanation and absorption into oneself, to excite the energies within to renew our human person subject to routine existence.

The old theories of aesthetics had, indeed, contributed some permanent values. Plato's definition of the circle as the most coherent form, had found confirmation from Leonardo. Aristotle's *Catharsis* had permeated European culture. Plotinus and the Christian theorists had, through diverse expression, given to Western art a sense of the exalted human self, called Divine, assimilated through the 'creative subjectivity' of man himself, man as artist or poet. At first he is a thing in the world of things. Then he seems to transcend his physical being and attains God. Soul experience dominates Christian art: It is not quite revealed. But it is suggested as the underlying reality. It is the universal current behind the sacred symbols and figures, and ritual objects, particularly the Christ on the Cross, and the Virgin Mary and infant Jesus.

The mystery of existence is called *Rahasya* in Indian culture. Certainly, in the era of the Hindu dynasties, the dominant idea of the hidden Unknown One and His Many manifestations prevail. The One Supreme Brahman felt desire. By cohabiting with his consort Lakshmi, He created other forms of *Maya*. They all have the spark of God in them. And everyone in the pluralist world desires to transcend the empirical ego, to unite with the One Supreme. Thus the entire Cosmos is Him. In it everything is alive: all the Selves with their life energies are illusory transmutations. They become complete only by merging with the highest self. Everything is thus the splendourous expression of God's *Maya*—outer disguises of the mystery behind all phenomena.

The act of creation is modelled on God's own act of creation. The world is like a *Lila* or sport, in which every human being, consciously or unconsciously, is emulating the function of Brahma, tending towards Him.

Indian artistic expression thus shows the efforts of human beings to dig deep into themselves, to exalt themselves, in and through human consciousness, to the hidden, obscure, elusive, absolute consciousness, the mystery behind things.

In Greek art also there is the attempt to realise the Gods through things. Unlike Indian art, which seeks fusion with the Cosmos, Greek art suggests the struggle with Nature. And man, as an individual, though subordinate to the perfection of the divinity, is important. In fact, the Gods are conceived as handsome human beings, distinguished from the earthly creatures only by a couple of wings on their shoulders. The artist did not forget himself in the effort to seek the mystery of his personality in life and death.

The assertive individual self of the Renaissance and after, actually came from Christianity, from the doctrine of the trinity—Father, Son and the holy ghost. The divine person assumed human form. The trinity was sustained as the ideal in early Christian art and achieved certain depths in Byzantine art. But in Giotto, Fra Angelico and the Pieta forms, though dominantly sacred, Christ appears more and more human in his torment and self redeeming passion.

As soon, however, as the Christian order began to dissolve, through the impact of Renaissance knowledge on the Biblical idea of creation, and when the 'in the beginning was the word' myth began to be questioned, the omnipresent soul began to disappear. By the end of the 15th century man found himself increasingly in a hostile world which he must conquer. And though Leonardo, Michelangelo, Titian all 'address nature', with some reverence, they seem to assert their individuality and aspire to their unique style.

I tried to understand the evolution of the early oriental and Christian art, with its search for higher consciousness, through images, as against the search for the music of the individual temperament in the West—the contrast of universal soul expression versus self-expression. And I was torn.

Apart from the Schizophrenia between my inheritance and my dabblings in Western thought, I was fascinated and baffled by the disconcerting array of forms which the dynamic West was producing.

There was some significance, after all, if I applied Hume's analysis of perception, in Whistler's concentration on the actual *sensation*, on the changing moods, and atmospheres, transmuted into his notorious *Nocturnes*. Manet, Monet, Pissaro had rendered nature

scenes, with great sensitiveness to the ghostly mists and delicate outlines below the heavy gloom, suddenly lit up by their prismatic colours, and revealing the poetry of the often grotesque buildings. The Turners and Constables I saw in the National Gallery in London during lunch hours, confirmed for me the truth of the 'Impression' of the vortex. Perhaps a sensation could contain as much depth if it was a heightened sensation. And as I was not a practicing Hindu, and did not pray before an image in any temple, I found that the doctrine of 'significant form' could not be dismissed altogether.

I looked at Picasso breaking old forms to make new forms, breaking them again and creating still new montages.

There was Kandinsky with his weird transcendences.

Paul Klee was recreating the naive unconscious of the child with lyrical effects and suggestions of fantasy.

Mondrian was making abstract geometrical squares to express the basic forms of intellectual construction to comprehend ultimate structures.

Oscar Kokoschka had gone beyond German expressionism to express the existentialist horror of life under fascism.

One could not turn one's back on all these imaginative efforts, even though some of the creations were baffling.

No past aesthetic system could embrace, in any coherent system, the effects of new materials, cybernetics, acrylic, plastic and electrically produced sounds of infinite variety, novels like *Ulysses* by James Joyce and *Mrs. Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf, without plots and rendered in neo-narratives, with new word formations, in the attempt to evoke music through onomatopoeic words and discordances.

Even the boundaries of various arts were breaking down. Montages of painting mixed with sculptures. Environment became architecture. Action drawing was popular. Moholy Nagy's surrealist photographs were admitted as art. Miro's broken world came to view. Masson experimented in painting by catching coloured sands on canvas. Diaghilev combined dance, sculpture, painting and music in his choreography.

Thus I accept the miscellaneous world of the arts in terms of the consoling phrase of Krishna in the Geeta: 'I take the forms desired by my worshippers'.

What aesthetic was I to evolve in the face of the plethora of diverse expressions?

If I was to follow the Hindu View of Art to its logical conclusion, I would end up with the revivalism of the ideals of Ajanta and Bagh by Abanindra Nath Tagore and his school, which both Havell and Coomaraswamy were backing from their Theosophical predilections. After initial assent, I saw the fatuity of evoking spirituality through attenuated imitationist forms and paint,

smoothened into vagueness by rubbing a wet towel on the already faint water colours.

On the other hand, I would see that most of the artists of the world had, under the effect of the bourgeois civilisation, in its alliance with mechanical materialism, automatised men, alienated him against his own individualism, and left him to work out his destiny in bits and pieces of creativeness. If, as William Morris had said, all happy work was a form of art, then every child was endowed with creativeness, thwarted by the injunctions of philistine society, so that the gifted individual was forced to become an individualist who asserts himself through eccentricity.

I had perhaps reached the existentialist position. My Being-in-situation conduced to despair about the future of everything, including myself.

At this stage, I read the lectures of William Morris on art. I was struck by his views that the role of creativeness itself had changed in the various historical periods. He felt that, in certain periods, specially the European Middle Ages, when all production was based on needs, the workmen were combined into associations not as workmen but honoured members of a guild. In the later 16th century, the artists were collected into workshops, and the division of labour was introduced to cope with the demands of the market for mass production. In the 18th century, the progressive dehumanisation of art took place because the machine took over much of the function of manufacture. The craftsman was reduced to be only a part of the totally machined cultures. And the produce became of minor unfelt expression, an object of trade and thus divorced from culture, in so far as in earlier periods, the craftsman had grown a few cubits in intensity when he was creating a work of pleasure.

I remember the famous passage of Morris which began with 'Time was':

'Time was when the mystery and wonder of handicrafts were well acknowledged by the world. But the thought of man became more intricate, more difficult to express: art grew a heavier thing to deal with, and its labour was more divided among great men, lesser men, and little men ... This was the growth of art: like all fruitful growth, it grew into decay; like all decay of what was once fruitful, it will grow into something new.'

If one believed in sustaining creativeness, to emerge from the decay, it was important, then, to study the history of world art. *But emphatically, to sustain creativeness, and to open ones inner gaze to new vistas, and hope, and not to study this history for its own sake like the Art critics who only seek to establish chronology, and who look without seeing.*

By this time I had also arrived at the hypothesis:

to go beyond the curiosity to see the inconsequential disabuse of terminology in the various schools of thought, to cultivate admiration for logic chopping minds. I must give up the systems and make the human person the subject of my philosophy. So I gave up academic life to write about human relations, and interested myself in creative expression in images, words, music and dance as private pleasures.

I was drawn to Rabindra Nath Tagore's innovatives in creative education at Shantiniketan and stay there for short periods. I was impressed by the fact that the Kala Bhavan had, in the poet's lifetime, a comprehensive attitude, which was not exclusively devoted to *Lalit Kala* or so called fine art. And there was a whole school, Sriniketan, as big as the then Shantiniketan, for the practice of crafts of various kinds.

I found that Mahatma Gandhiji also had imbibed the ethos of the Tagore model, when he suggested

'Learning by doing' as the fundamental tenet of his scheme for *Basic Education*.

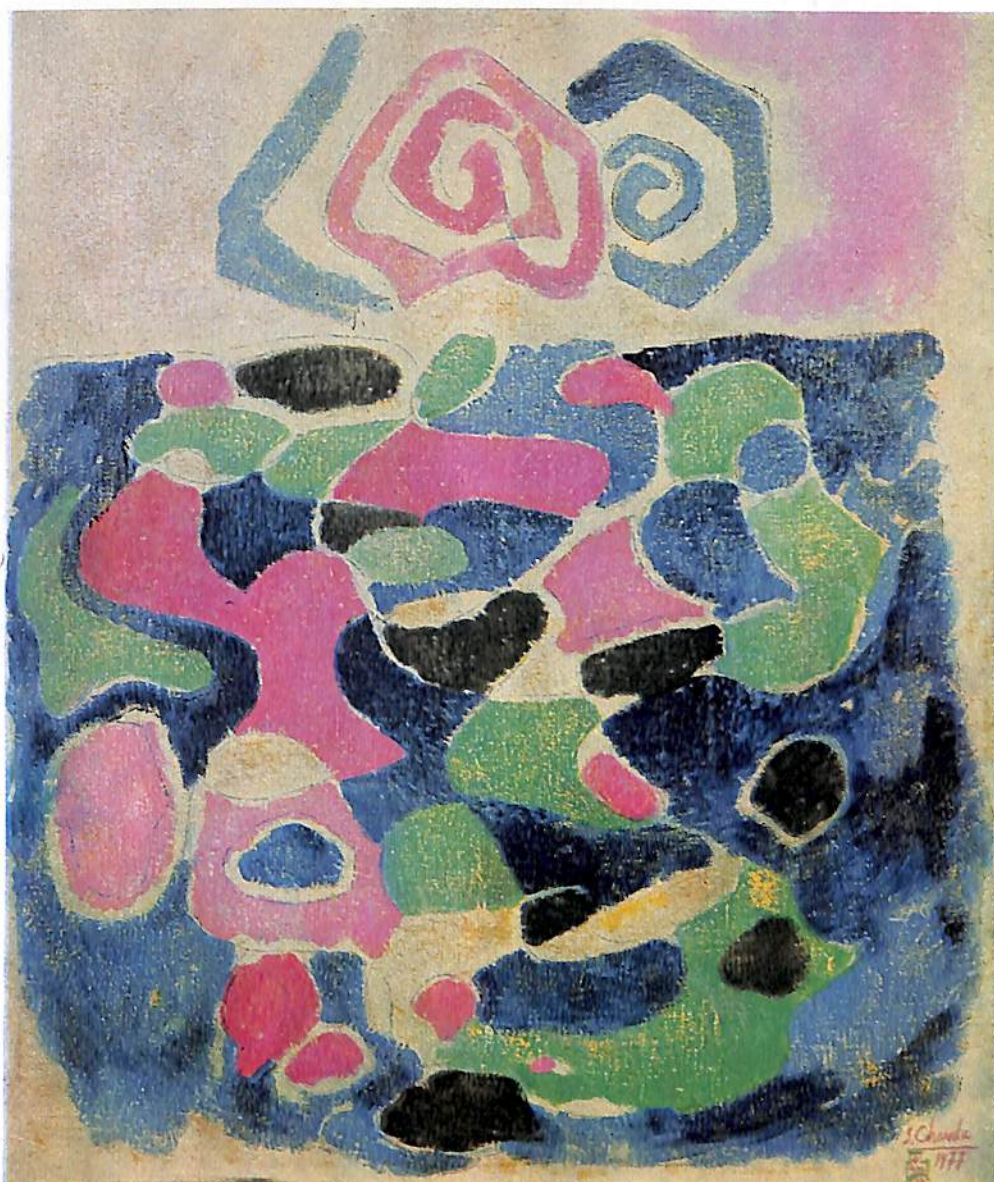
I dedicated myself to the editing of an encyclopaedia of the creative arts of Asia in *Marg* book magazine in one hundred and thirty volumes.

As Chairman of the National Akademi of Art for five years I brought about the Triennale of World Contemporary Art in 1970—This is being held every three years.

As Tagore Professor of Art, I taught through actual experience of artworks the distinction between *looking* and *seeing*. I am currently devoted to the extension-intension of the new young in the Education system to make for total growth through creative expression beyond the making of clerks. I say creativeness is all, if men and women are to aspire to be whole men and women.

□





Reflections—I

Chavda : the golden years

DNYANESHWAR NADKARNI

THERE is a unique exuberance and suppleness of line about Shri Chavda's art which has been with it ever since he first returned from his studies in Europe some time before the Second World War.

For many years Chavda has been steeped even in such other arts as music and dance. In his early youth in India he studied Indian classical music, and its impact never quite left him. It is worth noting that, while studying at the Slade School of Fine Arts in London between

1935 and 1938, Chavda learnt, among others, under a distinguished designer called Vladimir Polunin. Polunin was the first to introduce modern stage decor in England and was a colleague of Leon Bakst and Picasso. Both these eminent men had designed decor for the Diaghilev ballets in the Imperial Ballet of Russia.

Chavda proceeded with his studies at the Academie de la Grande Chaumiere in Paris in 1937 and at the St. Martin School of Art in London between 1936 and 1939. Later studies were still to come as late as in 1955.



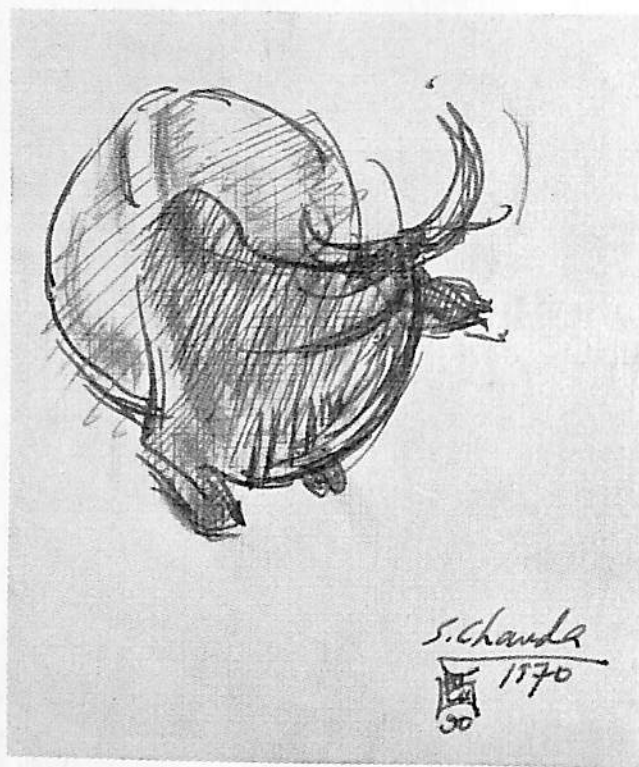
S. Chavda
1960

The Cock

The pursuit of perfection was always there, and with each effort on the canvas or in the drawing book, the young man's art achieved new miracles.

I first remember seeing one of Chavda's very first shows at the Prince's Room in the old Taj Mahal Hotel. Ever since then Chavda has held his exhibitions at the now refurbished Taj art gallery. The shows, coming almost regularly every year, traverse a fantastic panorama of line, colour and texture.

One finds certain elementary virtues in Chavda. They would be considered outstanding even among those steeped in the academic discipline. First comes his command of line. He has always had a great fascination for people and their bodies. Whether it is a European ballet dancer whom he is studying through the wings in a European theatre, or whether it is an Indian folk dancer who is going virulently through the motions of his dance—along with several other such colourful dancers—Chavda can be seen to capturing



The Bull

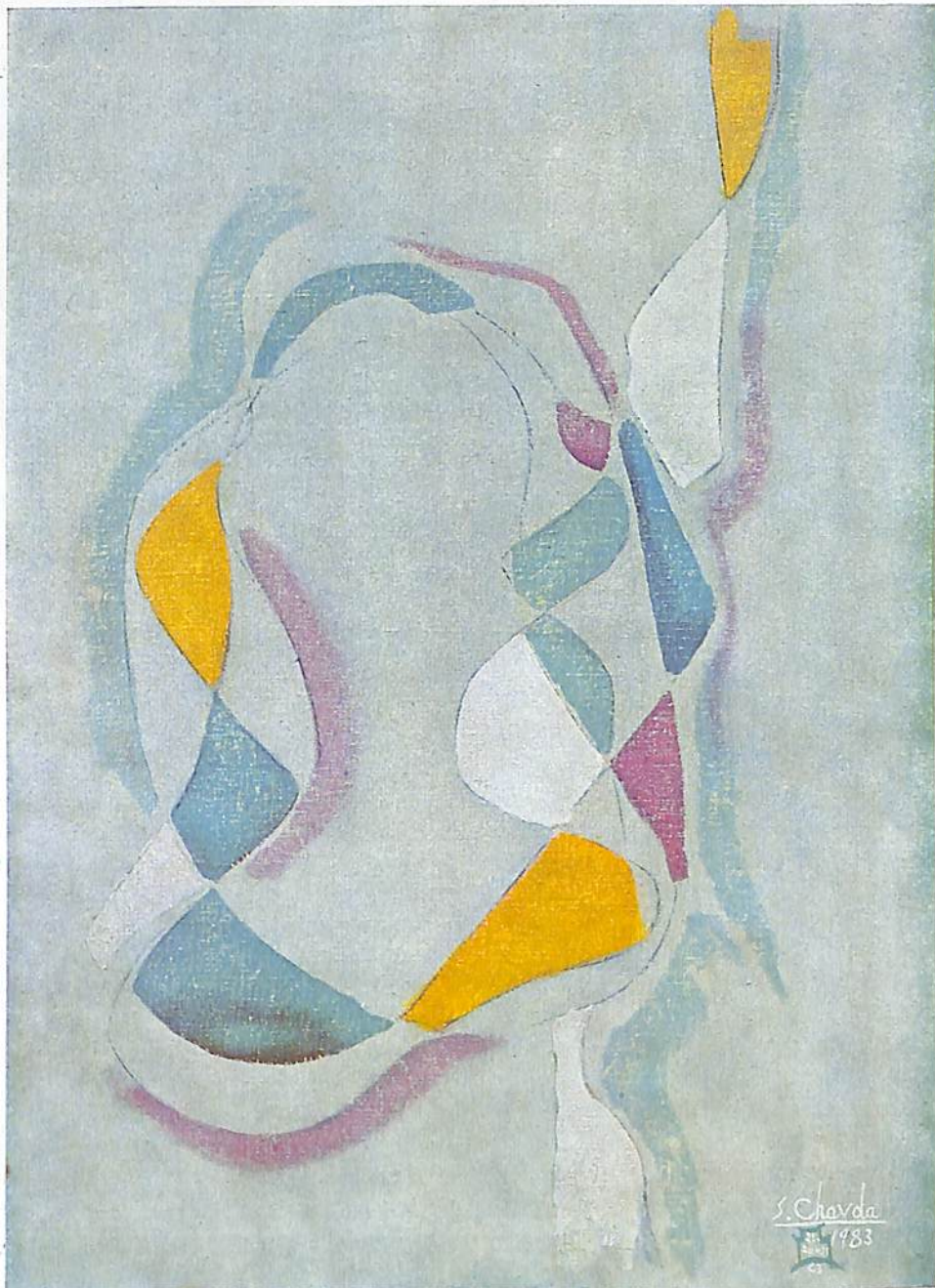
the poetry of the physique and the dynamism of the dancing in a most authentic way.

It was these versions of the grand celebrations of the dancer's (and musician's) body that immediately caught the eye in Chavda's shows in the Prince's Room. It was as if the young artist, freshly returned from his sojourn in Europe, was inimitably capturing the ethos of Indian living, of the Indian face and the muscle, of the wild gesture of abandon dancing.

The young Chavda at this stage set out to steep himself in the visual exuberance of his country. He travelled extensively, touring the villages of South Gujarat, South India and Bihar. He went to Ajanta and Ellora and gazed wonderstruck at the pristine beauty of the frescoes and the sculptures there. He went deep into such regions as Nagaland and Mizoram; later on taking in Khajuraho, Sanchi and Kashmir.

Chavda's crowded sketch-books of this period bear witness to his mastery of anatomy and of colour. He captures the smallest nuances of body and expression as they distinguish the tribals of Nagaland or Mizoram. He portrays the indigenous and colourful dresses of all these ancient people. These views of our tribal brethren convince us that rhythm is ingrained in the bodies of these simple brethren of ours and that we can discover the true essence of civilisation among them.

Chavda's wanderlust has been insatiable over the



Reflection—II

years. He exercises himself without pause drawing and making sketches of exotic type. It is in this manner that he has aligned himself with a wide variety of Indian types. He has also perhaps plumbed the dramatic essence of these wiry bodies which grace the tribal panorama.

In 1950 Chavda undertook a fruitful trip of Malaya, Indonesia (including Java and Bali) and such other historic places as Borobudur and the Parambanam Temple.

It was natural that Chavda should discover many ethnic affinities between Indian tribals on the one hand

and men and women of the primitive cultures of South-East Asia. He had long ago imbibed the grace and beauty of these ethnic types. These qualities shine through his drawings and paintings. When one sees them one reaches back to something permanent. It is this which unites all the types which Chavda has drawn through the many years of his career.

Chavda did not forget to have another whiff of Europe when he toured England, France and Switzerland in 1955. About a decade later he paid a very useful visit to the United States. The cup of his experience was

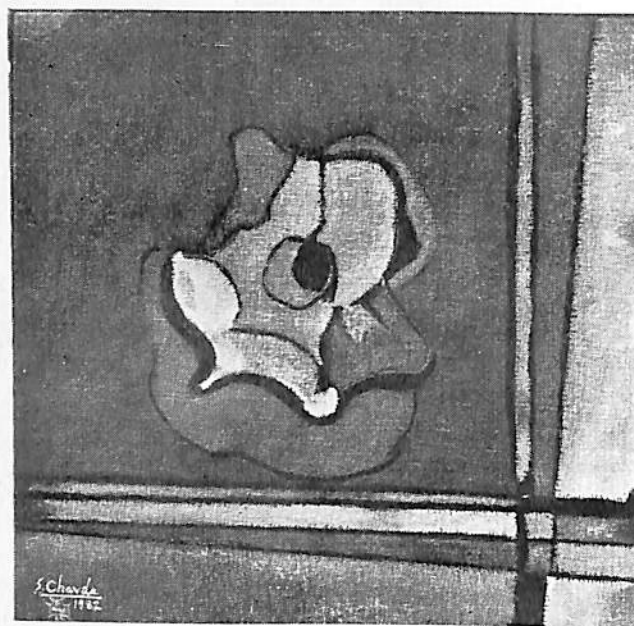


Pupil of Martha Graham

now full. Along with the initial sensuality which touches his line, there is now a sumptuous maturity. He essays his dancers and musicians with ease all the while investing them with a new awareness of their basic human qualities. He almost looks upon them with a philosophic eye—a feat never quite easily achieved by a painter preoccupied by the physical manifestations of the human personality.

Chavda was of course never satisfied with projecting on canvas of the mere exotica of life. He was always interested in delving into deeper truths. For him the road to abstraction was natural development. To date Chavda has created myriad abstract forms and invested them with the same sensuous values of colour and texture that characterise his portraits of men and women.

This stress on abstraction suggests a concentration on the intricacy of form that is not easy to achieve. Today we can find Chavda working his basic drawings in very small sizes. It is these which automatically grow



Painting VII

into canvases of average size. There is an interlocking of subtle forms which is at the centre of the abstraction one sees here. The whole canvas presents an intricate design which has no direct pictorial reference.

The oscillation between the pictorial and the abstract has always been carried in his stride by Chavda. May be there was no abstract impulse when Chavda used to draw his tribals, animals or primitives; but the abstract feeling has been very strong when it was felt that the artist had fully developed his pictorial impulse. Today there is an unusual harmony within the abstract and the pictorial ends of Chavda's art.

Every day Chavda works meticulously at his art, perparing hundreds of small designs with which to develop his canvases. Throughout the day he is immersed in his work. But he also finds time to take in an occasional Indian concert or a dance performance. The Chavda family is deeply devoted to these arts. I think Chavda never finds himself working in isolation from arts like dance and music. That is why so many of his works vitally project the dynamic expression of these arts.

In 1986, the Lalit Kala Akademi of New Delhi conferred on Chavda its coveted Fellowship. It was an occasion for celebration. But Chavda treated it with the usual grace and composure of his personality. For him it was probably another reminder that his work waited for him, that he could never permanently get away from the canvas and paints. □

Henry Moore

Homage with some dissent

—KRISHNA CHAITANYA



HENRY Moore (1898-1986) would have done very well as the court artist of Gargantua for he believed in a gigantic scale in his sculptures. And Gargantua was the presentation at the National Gallery this winter, with a hundred sculptures and a hundred drawings and graphics. We should be grateful to Britain for choosing India's capital as the venue for the first major posthumous retrospective of Moore's work and his large last exhibition to be held outside Britain for many years to come as present planning stands.

As strong as his conviction about size was Moore's faith in shape. He has stated: "A sensitive observer of

sculpture must also learn to feel shape simply as shape, not as description or reminiscence. . . . Since the Gothic, European sculpture has become overgrown with moss, weeds—all sorts of surface excrescences which completely concealed shape. It has been Brancusi's special mission to get rid of this overgrowth, and to make us once more shape-conscious. To do this he had to concentrate on very simple direct shapes, to keep his sculpture, as it were, one-cylindrical, to refine and polish a single shape to a degree almost too precious. Brancusi's work, apart from its individual value, has been of historical importance in the development of contemporary



Reclining woman, 1930, 17.8 cm—Bronze

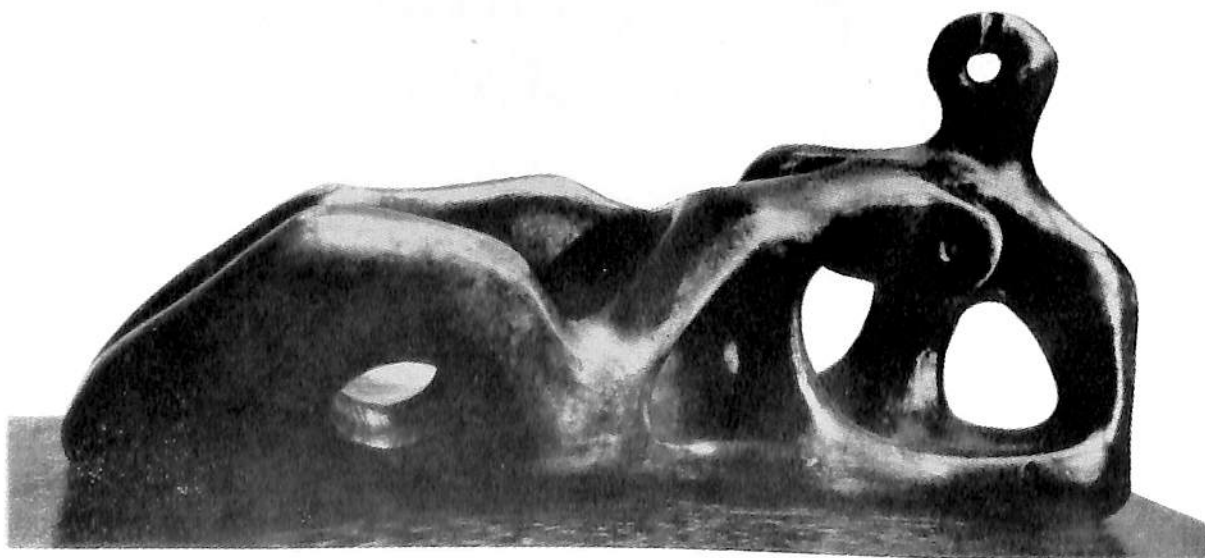
sculpture." It is interesting to note that Moore affirmed the autonomy of shape while paying homage to Brancusi. The cult of pure shape or form should have led to abstraction or constructivism. But, although he simplified form drastically, Brancusi never surrendered organic and human reference. As for Moore, we have his statement: "It is on the human figure that sculpture is based, even if you are going to be an abstract sculptor." So we have this paradox of the devotee of pure shape clinging to the articulated structure of the skeleton even when he ruthlessly pared away the mantle of flesh and skin, constructing forms of wood and string or wire, like Pevsner and Gabo, in which the voids are articulated by interpenetrating planes of string or wire but, unlike them, retaining clear human reference, as in the bronze and string "Mother and Child" of 1939.

Moore seems to have learnt from Archipenko the manner of transposing the concave and the convex in the human form, opening it up to make voids serve as volumes. Though he went farther than Archipenko in creating sculptures in two or three detached pieces, this too is an extension of the same approach, for the contours reforge continuity across the separations in the mind's eye. The figure within the figure, as in the "Helmet" series, is also a similar variation and there is some anticipation of it in Epstein's "Rock Drill" of 1913. Brancusi's simplification led in the direction of exquisite beauty, as in his "Sleeping Muse" series. But Moore preferred power, the Longinian sublime, to what he perhaps considered—wrongly if he did—to be merely pretty. Here he got cues from many sources: from the paintings of Masaccio and Picasso, the paintings and sculptures of Michelangelo, from Egyptian and Pre-Columbian sculpture. Mostly he left his figures unclad.



Seated woman, 1956, cast, 1980 Bronze, (H) 76.2 cm., Henry Moore Foundation

A visit to Greece made him experiment with drapery. But we do not see its flowing, elegant, shapely use which passed on to our Gandhara sculpture though through the mediation of the friezes on Roman sarcophagi. Moore used it primarily for the textural variation of the surface. And thus, personalising in a perfect amalgam diverse influences, Moore evolved his language of a titanic form



Reclining Figure, 1938, Bronze, (L) 21.6 cm. Henry Moore Foundation

and maintained it with variations of surface rather than of mass, of accent rather than of rhythm, all through his life. Jean Arp wanted his sculptures to find their "humble, anonymous place in the woods, the mountains, in nature". It is doubtful if Henry Moore's sculptures are or were meant to be humble presences. But he was even more keen than Arp that grass and sky should be the backdrop to his works and luckily the National Gallery had enough open space to provide this kind of siting to some of his greatest creations.

Barbara Hepworth, Kenneth Armitage and Moore hail from the Yorkshire moors with their desolate grandeur. The first did not retain the telluric link, the second did it only partially. Moore's art at first seems to be its apotheosis. Is it not the earth spirit with her vast generativity that we see in the recurring motifs of the reclining woman and the mother and child?

Or is it? There are ambiguities here.

It may be a cold strategem on the part of nature to make woman warm man's blood as mistress because this makes her a mother. Schopenhauer morosely and Bernard Shaw wittily said this was the truth of the matter. But mankind will lose a lot of its humanity if it does not believe with Lucretius that sensuous beauty generates love which is more than sex though it leads to it so that beauty still unborn may rise to the shining shores of light. The two aspects have to be integrated and tradition fumbled for a long while here. The mother goddess figurines of the Indus culture epoch stressed fertility to the point of making the figure unattractive, the Sunga terracottas presented playmates who seemed to have entirely forgotten that they had a primary responsibility in procreation. It is the Kushan epoch that created a synthesis, in mother and child sculptures where the mother continues to be the sensuously desirable mistress too, and the integration was stabilised in Chandella and Eastern Ganga art.

Neither the reclining woman nor the mother figure in Moore is beautiful or meant to be beautiful. Was he reverting to Schopenhauer's sombre concept of a ruthless nature pursuing its own end, which could be managed by the sex drive alone without bothering about sensuous beauty? The poor male has a poor role in all this, despite the formal excellence of the family groups. In fact the male has little role in Moore's scheme of things. Death in the battle-field has been the male's historic role, occasionally of undying splendour, most often of martyrdom. But, although as a soldier he was nearly a casualty in the war, as a war artist Moore made drawings of air-raid shelters and these too he made into studies of reclining woman, his favourite motif. The sculptures of fallen warriors are scarcely a plangent outcry against war; they are little more than experiments in historicist formalism, with plenty of models in European art from the Hellenic

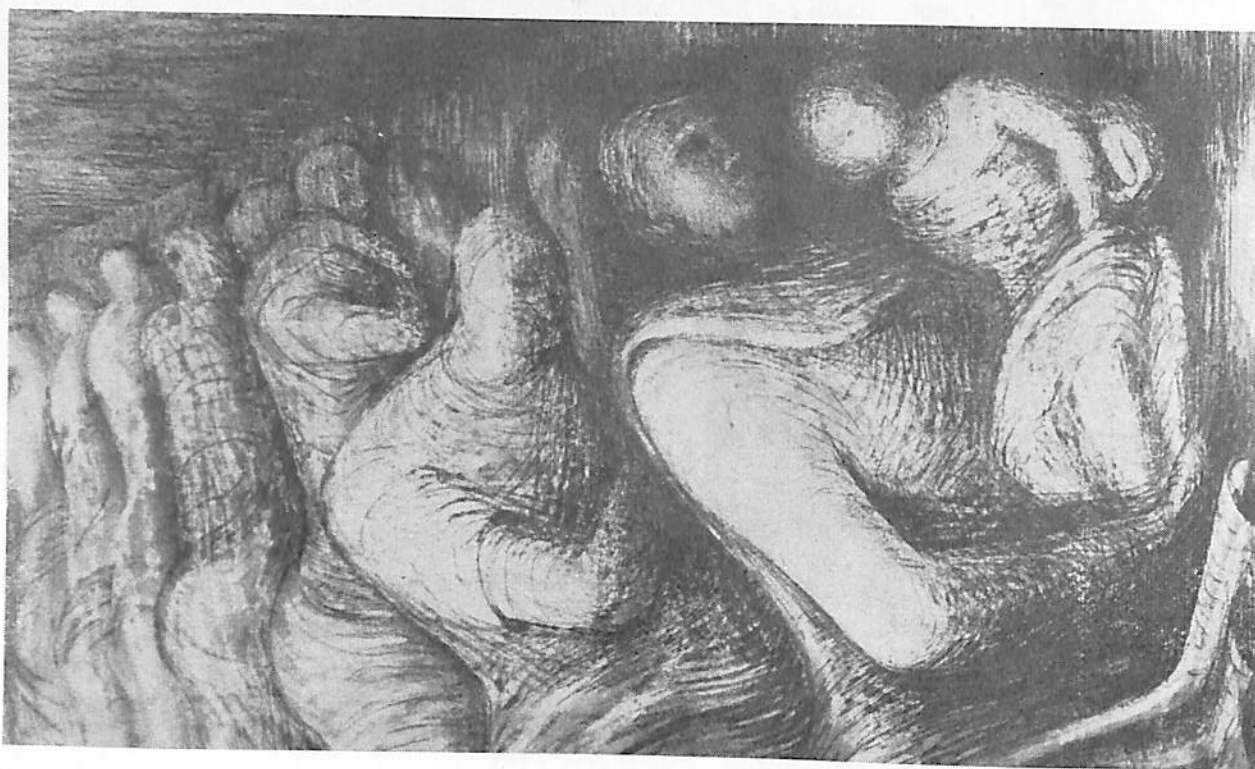


Family Group 1945/49 Bronze (H) 60 inches Collection; Tate Gallery, London

epoch and Trajan's column onwards.

Was Moore a pure formalist? When he said that even abstract sculpture should have a reference to the human figure, did he jettison the repeated crucifixion that is human fate, to concentrate on a play—a magnificent play undoubtedly—with the human form? The derivation of the basic form of the reclining figure (and of the mother figure) endorses the right to make this query. It is derived from a sculpture of the fierce Toltecs who replaced the gentle Mayas in Yucatan in the tenth century. The god used to receive human sacrifices on his belly, flattened as an altar. He has been changed into a female figure by Moore. And if his figures, including the King and Queen too, have a far vision, they do not seem to be, like the Toltec god, looking beyond into an order where blood has to be exacted for order in existence which for the same reason was termed by the Upanishads as "a great terror" (*mahadbhayam*), "a hurled thunderbolt" (*vajra-mudyatam*). The query implicit here can be made explicit. What was Moore's reading of reality? Do his figures to which his art donated an archetypal impressiveness have an archetypal meaning?

Perhaps, in the final analysis, Moore's art did not penetrate deep into reality, create a myth that was a sensing of that reality. That prehistoric mother goddess figurine called the Venus of Lespugue is incredibly



Row of Sleepers, 1941, Pen and ink, chalk, crayon, watercolour, 54.5 × 32 cm. The British Council

brilliant and modern in its stylisation. But it belongs to a period when basic perception itself was mythopoeic. I find it impossible to believe that it was created as an experiment in a shape of novelty and difficult to imagine its creator proceeding to numerous variations out of a purely formalist motivation. But Moore was declaredly in love with shape, simply as shape, and we find him presenting his basic figure reclined, semi-seated, seated, upright, hollowed out, reduced to bone structure, square or curved, and the titles declare these purely formal intentions. And in working out such variations he freely accepts cues. The "Mother and Child, Curved" of 1983 owes a lot to the "Mermaid" of 1945 by Henri Laurens.

There are many paradoxes about Moore. He swore by pure shape, then insisted that even abstract sculpture is based on the human figure, then treated the human figure as pure shape, not a shape enshrining a spirit. Then again, forgetting his own insistence on human reference even in abstract sculpture, he did a lot of abstract work. His statement in this connection is interesting. "Although it is the human figure which interests me most deeply, I have paid great attention to natural forms, such as

bones, shells and pebbles, etc. Sometimes for several years running I have been to the same part of the seashore—but each year a new shape of pebble has caught my eye, which the year before, though it was there in hundreds, I never saw. Out of the millions of pebbles passed in walking along the shore, I choose out to see with excitement only those which fit in with my existing form-interest at the time. A different thing happens if I sit down and examine a handful one by one. I may then extend my form-experience more, by giving my mind time to become conditioned to a new shape." But shapes like those of the design components of the "Time-Life Screen" of 1952 or the "Locking Piece" of 1962 are not derivations from natural forms however modulated, they are abstract and constructivist creations.

Herein probably is revealed the ultimate truth of his genius. Like the Indian aestheticians, Moore believed that art should go beyond the imitations (*anukarana*) of created things to a sharing (*anukirtana*) of the surge of creativity by creating a rich repertory of magnificent forms. They came to Delhi and their coming was a landmark.

□

Art and Environment

—KESHAV MALIK

OF the worlds of the Indian arts, the one of modern plastic art is the smallest. Smallness is of course not necessarily a flaw but when smallness has overtones of being 'frog-in-the-well' on the part of the practitioners one had better question oneself. The world of Indian plastic art is the 'world of a frog-in-the-well' only in some of the implications of that well known phrase. There is today a sizeable body of good modern art on the Indian scene; many of the artists are hard working, despite economic or social disadvantages. Also, as one looks back one can be sure there has been artistic growth and development of one kind or another. And nonetheless one has misgivings, one doubts the importance of the activity for the generality of the public. One sees that art, or rather its spirit, is hardly reflected in the on-going concerns of urban life. It does not seem to permeate the minds of the 'pillars' of society, to use a cliché. And even when art works are appreciated the lives or the life styles of artists are not. The former are not at the centre of things, they do not move the collective mind, the heart or attitudes to any notable degree. Also, compared to art movements elsewhere, our own artistic mind has no brisk interchanges; artists do not take up artistic issues often enough, nor even public ones. They do not have much to learn from other disciplines. Lacking enough intellectual interchange, the area of awareness becomes narrow and so, as a consequence, few discoveries are thrown up in the field. Too often, the cues for change, quite as in other spheres of our life, came from outside. This betrays some lack of activity of spirit and which in turn leads to passivity and imitativeness, as also to low grade mutual acrimony. No large issues appear to exist to resist the micro, or 'worm's eye' view.

All these are non-specifics. Yet the fact remains, that, for the expansion of artistic activity they had better be cogitated by all who are concerned with the local environment. Were our artists to relate themselves consciously and critically to their surroundings they may well become more inventive and innovative. Academic training in art colleges equips artists, but of course. But that training would not appear to be enough for any life-long artistic pilgrimage. A creative relationship to one's environment has to do with many other life



Keshav Malik—Sketch by Santosh

values as well than those of technics. Bright ideas are unlikely to strike a person who is not ridden by the deeper necessity, or social purpose. In our given Indian case, the motor power can perform only be the self-aware, highly motivated artist, aware of the delights of art and aware of its human ethos transforming energies. In a country like this, a sense of human concern could stoke the artistic impulse to a blaze. No matter what charges one may bring up against the poet Tagore, he had that concern; without compromising himself intellectually or artistically he availed himself of Indian materials and related to Indian environments. He used folk forms and recast them creatively, he brought the rural and the urban minds closer together. This binding of the high and the little traditions, or the discovering of relationships, betokens 'horse-sense' as also a sense of belonging to the community. The accretion of a strong individuality in our time would be a most precious component in the forming of creative societies. Unfortunately in its latest manifestations, in the West, the nature of that individuality has become not a little bit warped, else, because of the growth of gigantic social or political institutions and the general anonymity of mass culture it (individuality) has been overshadowed. This has at times resulted into community-alienated art even though such art may well have other values. What however cannot be forgotten is that though art

must continue to be unique, it must nevertheless relate, refer to, and reform the life of the members of the human community, in order for it to be memorable. Are Indian artists, aware of these moorings and implications? Is art's necessarily anarchical self wedded to the core value and needs of our human community and the obligations of time and place. This is in some doubt.

Indian art and artists, till the other day subordinated self before their chosen God; also, then, things were writ small. Expansion was in imaginative space than in the purely temporal or spatial ones. We need not accept the logic of all this. Perhaps all that was not due to conscious wisdom. But given a small, crowded world and given our modest economic standards it would be rational to cut one's coat in keeping with the available cloth. But of course one cannot lay down a law in this regard. This is only a general counsel, no more. At the same time, if one may say so, the use of inexpensive *desi* art material available in the Indian market could perhaps make art be more accessible, provided of course the powers of artists who tackle it are strong as well. Clay is an inexpensive material and one very germane to Indian conditions for murals. As with K.G. Subramanyam, the results have been significant. Also, paintings in small format can not only be made available to the public at a cheaper cost but (as has been seen in the small format shows) the works gain, rather than lose, in intrinsic impact. They become more intimate. An expanding, or a less crowded world may have led to the gigantism in American art, as earlier in ancient Egypt.

None of India's monuments are gigantic, they seem planned to the measures of a man—whether or not there was then any ideology of Humanism behind them; thus also the sculptures and the painted materials. Such an aesthetic approach is, at least today, more sensible; nothing to excess, except the intensity of spirit. Art is, after all, not for brow-beating but for the heart's delight.

Also, art in the earlier India was closely bound up with all the other arts and crafts, and totally embraced with architecture. It is time artists recalled the value of these possibilities. Without involving the commonality of the people, much as folk or tribal art does for the folk, urban art can only become an ornament or prestige point for those higher up in the hierarchy. The lion's share of attention, of honour, will be taken by productive techniques and the attitudes they breed. But such soil will fail to produce true harmony and communion of spirit because it has no humus of feeling. This is why fine art, must silently encourage and propose a view of human relationships where with there is a value put on such experience as can be shared. Such sharing goes to make the genuine community. The

modern spirit demands the freedom of choice from one, and art is symbolic of that very act in the sphere of the imagination. Yet art unless its value is realized within the rubric of the human community becomes freakish, and all that this denotes. One's voluntary mental subordination to norms—civic, social or political is a moral act and which does not enslave one, rather, it gives freedom and meaning. Both the form and the content of art have at times gone off at a tangent. The power of fancy which results in surrealism of sorts is an expression of the dream. It is the inventive faculty of the human mind; but unless such power is wedded to the convictions of a mature, responsible and responsive human self the faculty of fancy spews only passing entertainment and ephemeral wonder. Thus also the sensuous talent for line and design is all important in plastic art, yet when separated from full sensing and being, it provides moments of pleasure but does not help in that transportive act which renews us, which makes us assert in our hearts that life has reason, that it has a certain amount of good, that we must be on the side of angels. It is only a genuine imaginative will which fuses all the other faculties of the human person into one ordered whole. True art ends alienation—alienation between man and man, between self and society, it humanizes one's raw, power-seeking impulses. That is why art's importance in the world of the modern megapolis where today's human being is all but denudded—turned out from the eden of the traditional context. The greater art can heal such spiritual split by giving the soul eyes, by calming the current restlessness and flightiness. Art makes one attend, concentrate and care. No good society is without the deeper attention. Could we say our megapolis has a surfeit of such catholicity of being—the disinterested attention?

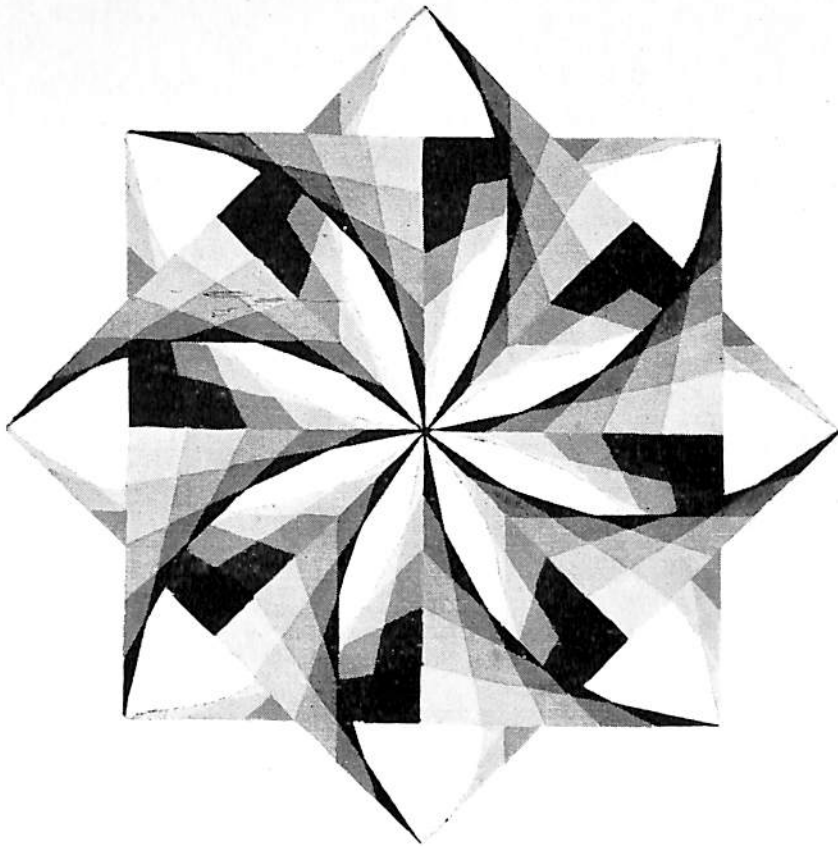
You cannot be expected to take on the burden of the whole world on your shoulders, but some at least of the artists in any vital culture are aware of abiding issues. They are capable of living beyond the moment. The authority and power of art must be parallel that of the other powers of a society. The onus rests on the artists. Their pursuit is entirely voluntary; it is upto them to give heart and mind to a mundane or even insane reality of conflicting forces.

These are long term, too general observations and may make no sense to someone in a hurry to achieve success. Yet foresight is not impossible. One need not be a 'frog-in-the-well' for all time. It may be possible, gradually, to guide one's creative energies towards relating art to environment as to ensuring an intense vision. Here is a wide enough berth, to experiment, invent, be unique.

□

KALA DARSHAN

Performing Arts



“We cannot escape our mental climate for they are in a literal sense the creation of our prevailing winds and the chemistry of our soil”

—Herbert Read



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Mrinalini Sarabhai

—SUSHEELA MISRA

MRINALINI Sarabhai's passionate love-affair with the art of dancing which began at the age of five (when she was little Mrinalini Swaminathan), has not cooled down in its ardour even after the passage of so many eventful decades. I have seen her in the Nineteen-forties as a dance-partner of the legendary Ramgopal; then in the fifties with her Kathakali dance-partner Chathunni Panikkar who was on the Staff of her "*Darpan*" for many years, and now in the Nineteen-eighties, I have been watching her dancing with her vivacious and versatile daughter Mallika whom she has lovingly groomed and launched into the world of dancing. "I love to dance; I cannot stop dancing", says Mrinalini with a smile almost apologetically, and adds: "Every time I dance, it is like a first time; always deeply personal and intensely experienced. It has to be felt anew, as each interpretation is an act of creation".

Mrinalini's interpretation of the popular and age-old story of the saintly queen Meerabai is also her own. She presents it as the story of the recollection of our real selves "in and out of the Maya of existence", revealing the two aspects of our personalities.

Dr Charles Fabri described Mrinalini as "an outstanding example of that new trend in Indian dancing, the arrival of a class of intelligentsia who is enriching Indian ballet with a new element. She is another world-famous interpreter of Indian ballet, and her work is marked by great knowledge, penetrating intelligence, and much cogitation".

During an interview, my very first question to her was: "No one in your family had ever evinced any interest in dancing! How did you get so deeply involved in the art?"

Mrinalini unhesitatingly replied: "I must have brought it with me from my previous birth—my *Poorva-janma-samskaara*. I believe in it. At the age of five, I firmly announced to my mother that I was going to be a dancer".

Her mother Mrs. Ammu Swaminathan was a well-known figure in Indian society and an M.P. for many years. Mrinal's sister Dr Lakshmi who married Mr Sahgal of the I.N.A, became famous as Captain Lakshmi, leading the Rani of Jhansi Regiment of the



Mrinalini in an Elegant Posture

I.N.A. under Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. Three entirely different personalities! By the age of 14, Mrinalini had decided not to hanker after Degrees, but to concentrate on the exacting art of dancing. Recalling those early years, she told me:

"Luckily, Rukmini Devi was already in the field, a pioneer opening the gates of the sacred ancient art for girls from respectable families. She was a good friend of my mother, and a great source of inspiration for



Performing a Kathakali Item

me. She suggested to my mother that I should learn Bharata Natyam from the well-known guru Muthukumara Pillay who was on the staff of her "*Kalakshetra*" in those days. Thus was laid the firm foundation of my training in the pure, traditional "*Pandanallur*" style. Later on, I went and stayed in the village of Pandanallur, free from all distractions of city-life. There I was able to imbibe the art from all-time great gurus like Meenakshisundaram Pillay and his son-in-law, Chokkalingam Pillay".

Her first encounter with death was the early passing away of her father to whom she was deeply attached. It was the first agonising experience of her life; but with rare courage, she decided to fulfil the great expectations that he had from her. "My father always knew that I would do something worthwhile in life. He taught me to search". Each one of her numerous choreographic creations has been the result of this constant search by a highly philosophical-minded danseuse. Mrinalini's Novel, "*This Alone Is True*" is set against the back-

ground of her early training-years, and it is autobiographical in parts. I asked her:

"Did not your people at home object to your taking up dancing as a career?"

"No one actually opposed me, but they were quite indifferent. They underestimated my intensity. Many people predicted that I would give up dancing, once I got married."

"You had come into the limelight when you danced as the partner of Ramgopal who was a world-celebrity in those times. But you did not stick to his troupe for more than a year or so! Why?"

"I wanted to be on my own as a solo dancer, so as to be free to create dancedramas according to my conceptions and interpretations".

"Your husband, Dr Vikram Sarabhai, played an important role in encouraging your art and promoting your career. How did he help you?"

"My husband loved my dancing. I never presented any new item on stage without having his preview. He took



Mrinalini in a Scintillating and Lyrical Posture



An Unusual Rhythmic Step

care of the stage-lighting etc, and on my first tour abroad, he accompanied me as I was feeling very scared".

One of her most cherished and inspiring experiences was a dance-recital she gave on the vast stage of the Palais de Chaillot in Paris almost four decades ago. She danced as the Fish Princess in a Ballet. The French audience rose as one to their feet and hailed her art with prolonged applause. The critics raved, and her troupe was flooded with bookings for the next six months.

Mrinalini found her ideal partner, guide, and inspiration in Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, whom she married in 1945. A great dilettante and connoisseur of music and dance—Indian as well as Western, he always upheld the highest ideals of Indian culture and traditions, and was a genuine patron of the fine arts in the broadest sense. With a wistful look, Mrinalini continued: "Actually it was Vikram who suggested that I should start a school for giving training in the classical dances of India in a place like Ahmedabad where people knew nothing about arts like Bharata Natyam, Kuchipudi and Kathakali".

It was under Dr Sarabhai's inspiration that the now internationally renowned "*Darpana Academy of Performing Arts*" was founded in 1948. Appropriately, the inauguration was done by Mrinalini's first guru, Sri Muthukumara Pillay who stayed on and taught in *Darpana* during the initial three years or so. Mrinalini became the first student; gradually, a steady stream of students came until it swelled into hundreds! Initially, *Bharata Natyam*, *Kuchipudi*, *Kathakali* and *Mohinie-attam* were taught by a team of very good gurus. Subsequently, she added other disciplines into "*Darpan*". The leather-shadow-puppets of Indonesian "*Ramayana*", and the traditional leather-puppets of Andhra Pradesh inspired her to start a department of Puppetry which has won international appreciation by now. The backbone of "*Darpan*" is *Bharatanatyam* of the pure "*Pandanallur*" style of guru Meenakshisundaram Pillay—her celebrated guru, under whose training Mrinalini used to practise seven hours each day: Like Dr Rabindranath Tagore, she is convinced that education should be imparted in the open-air as close to Nature as possible. Children should not be cooped up in classrooms and overburdened with facts.

The idea of women learning *Kathakali* is still a very controversial matter. My next question was: "Why did you learn *Kathakali* which might have made your style masculine?".

"I learnt only the *lasya* aspect, the female roles. *Kathakali* is such a powerful medium for dance-dramas. This *Kathakali* training has helped me a great deal in choreographing dance-dramas, and I am lucky to have had Guru Kunju Kurup staying in my home in Madras to teach me".

I requested Mrinalini to tell me about some of her interesting experiences as a performing artist during the last several decades, here and abroad.

"That would need a whole book!"

"Then please tell me about your years in Shantiniketan with Gurudev Tagore".

"I reached Shantiniketan two years before Gurudev's death. He was such a wonderful and extraordinarily inspiring personality. From the day I arrived in Shantiniketan, Gurudev knew that I was a dedicated dancer. Though I was quite inexperienced, he made me to do the choreography for "*Chandalika*" very soon after I joined Shantiniketan".

"I have heard that you got much encouragement from Pt. Nehru too!"

"Yes, Pandit Nehru was pleased with my devotion to the art. Whenever we danced in Delhi, I kept two corner-seats vacant for him. He often used to slip into the hall, watch the performance, and slip out before anyone except the organisers noticed. When I danced in

New York in 1961, dancers flew in from all over. The great dancer Ruth St. Denis, the pioneer of modern American dance, was not in good health, and yet she came. And so did Martha Graham and many others. After the programme, Ruth St. Denis pulled out an old photograph and wrote on the back of it:

"Your whole being is the fulfilment of all I have spoken all my life". I could see that she was deeply moved, and so was I."

As she has choreographed "Scores" of dance-ballets, one can give only the names of a few, such as Kalidasa's "*Kumara Sambhavam*" in Bharata-Natyam style; "*Nala Charitham*", "*Raavana Vijayam*", and "*Tilottama*" in Kathakali style, "*Sharabhendra Bhoopala Kuravanji*" in which she used to dance the role of Princess Madanavalli in her younger days; "*Ulupe-Arjuna*"—a revival of the ancient "*Bhagavatamela*" dance-drama technique, "*Chitrangada*", "*Snehana Satadal*" in contemporary style; "*Geeta Govinda*" "*Ramayana*", "*Manushya*" (about the span of human life—this was in Kathakali style in which Mrinalini was partnered by Chaathunni Panikkar), and many abstract themes like "*Aspirations*", "*Creations*", "*Suicide*" and so on. "*Aspirations*" which was widely televised in India, was inspired by her concern for "The Silent Valley." A great lover of trees, Mrinalini is the President of the Association of the Friends of Trees. The music for this ballet was composed by Sri Sunil Bhattacharya of Pondicherry Ashram.

Mrinalini's latest book "CREATIONS" is a gorgeously brought out ("*Mapin*") Publication through which she has tried to explain the creative urge which prompted her to choreograph many fresh items reflecting contemporary values and the conflicts of our age. While her technique is firmly rooted in traditions imbibed from her gurus, she presents many current problems as seen through the sensitive eyes of a dancer. In "*Paraasakti*", she expresses her deep anguish at the violence, hatred, poverty, and selfishness surrounding us. Through the role of Universal Energy (*Shakti*) she expresses her conviction that we can surely find a cure for all these ills, for, are we not created in the image of the *Supreme* !

The pollution of the sacred "*Ganga*" brings out a cry of pain from the artiste's heart "Oh Ganga-Ma ! what have we done to you ? We cannot live, if you die. None but our own purified selves can cleanse the polluted waters...". "*Bride-Burning*", and "*Suicide*" of harrassed young wives are some of the contemporary evils boldly projected through her creations.

Mrinalini and her "*Darpan*" Troupe have been abroad more than 25 times since 1949; by now, they have performed all over the world covering all the major cities of the West, Middle East, East, and South East-



A Delightful Gesture

Asia. Few dancers have enjoyed the advantages of such a wide and extensive training as Mrinalini has fortunately had. She learnt *Bharata Natyam* under some of the greatest gurus such as Muthukumara Pillay, Ellappa Pillay, the legendary Pandanallur Meenakshisundaram Pillay and his son-in-law—Chokkalingam Pillay. She received *Kathakali* training under the famous Guru Kunju Kurup. While studying in Switzerland, she took lessons in *Russian Ballet* and *Greek dancing*. On her return, she spent three years in Shantiniketan and toured with Poet Tagore's Troupe, dancing the leading roles in many of his dance-dramas. She spent a short time in *Java* learning their *dancing* under its foremost teacher, Prince Todjoekoesoeme. All these qualifications would have been wasted if Mrinalini had not been equipped with this endless creative urge which has inspired her to enrich the classical dances of India.

Today "*Darpan*" attracts students from not only all parts of India, but also foreigners. After Mrinalini led a Delegation of dancers to China, two well Chinese dancers—Madam Zhang Juen, and Madam Liv Youlan came all the way from China to study Indian classical dancing in "*Darpan*" ! Visiting "*Darpan*" once, I noticed the love she gave to her students and the

affection with which they looked up to her as their "Amma" (mother).

The tragic death of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai at the young age of 50 was an irreparable loss for our country in the fields of Scientific Research, Atomic and Space Science, and also in the sphere of Fine Arts. In Mrinalini's words: "Vikram left a deep and terrible void in our lives. And yet, our home still seems full of his presence".

Close bonds with her daughter Mallika and with her son Kartikeya and family, and her deep involvement in Vikram's brainchild, "*Darpan*" have helped Mrinal to lend a very creative and purposeful life in spite of the empty void in her personal life. It is indeed Mrinalini's great good fortune that she has in her beautiful, versatile, and accomplished daughter Mallika, a true partner in dancing, an efficient administrator for "*Darpan*", and a vivacious dancer who can easily grasp her mother's ideas and translate them into dancing.

Although the *Darpana*-troupe of dancers has performed in over 40 countries outside India, Mrinalini "makes no concession to the West". She has zealously guarded "the pure, religious, mystical quality of the Hindu dance. Among the many classical dance-styles, Mrinalini's favourite is *Bharata Natyam*, followed by *Kathakali*, *Kunchipudi*, and *Mohinieattam*. *Kathak*, she feels, is simpler than these, as its emphasis is on foot-movements while standing straight, and not in the plie (bend) pose of other classical dance-forms with their detailed emphasis on every part of the body.

Many Documentary Films have been made on the Darpan Troupe such as the B.B.C. Documentary of one hour in 1971, the film on her abstract piece, "*Song Of Creation*" in U S A in 1972, the film "*Shakuntala*" in West Germany in 1978, and "*Aum-Namah-Shivaaya*" by Films Division in India in 1980. She is the author of "*Captive Soil*" (a Play), "*Selections Of Kan*" (Poems), "*This Alone Is True*" (A Novel), a Text-book on Bharatanatyam, and "*Creations*". The last one (*Creations*) truly reflects her philosophy, aesthetics, her wide ranging interests, her concern for harmony between man and nature, and for the oppressed—all of which she expresses in her language which is "*Dance*". As one friend of hers said:—"If you want to know Mrinalini, you should see her dancing. Her entire spirit is reflected in it".

For her dedication to the art, Mrinalini has been honoured with many titles and Awards such as "*Naatya-kalaakovida*" (for Bharata Natyam), a rare "*Veera-srinkhala*" for Kathakali, *D. Litt* from Viswabharati University, "*Padmasri*" from the Government of India, the *Medal of the French Archives* of Internationale de la Dance, the *Diploma of The American Academy of Dramatic Art*, and so on. In spite of all these distinctions



A Sequence in Bharat Natyam

conferred on her, Mrinalini remains a very warm, human, and friendly person.

Hailed as "the Martha Graham of India", and as "the High-Priestess of Indian Classical Dancing" Mrinalini has taken Indian dancing all over the world in the purity of its classical traditions, and in the spirit of India's contemporary vision. Among the many appreciative complements showered on her abroad, the one which she cherishes most has been that of the famous American dancer and ardent lover of Indian dancing, Ruth St. Denis who wrote in "*Theatre Arts*" in 1961 after witnessing Mrinalini and her Troupe dancing in New York:

"In one stunning gesture, Mrinalini lifts the use of the dance from the ordinary to the sublime. As a cultural Ambassador, she is worth fifty statesmen." □

Nala Pambu..... The Good Snake

—YOGAMANI MEENAKSHI DEVI

Nala Pambu is a piece from the forthcoming book 'The Rishis and The Rakshashas' by Meenakshi Devi in which she brings into focus the versatility of her pupil Saraswathi, in Bharat Natyam, whom she taught for 10 years when she was only eight years old.

Saraswathi, a poor tribal girl, has now turned out to be one of the upcoming exponents of this art form under the stewardship of Yogamani Yogacharini Meenakshi Devi, who has in the last 15 years taught 10,000 aspirants in Yoga, Dance and Music, at her Ashram in Pondicherry. She has also been editing the Journal 'Yoga Life' for the last so many years under the guidance and supervision of her husband and Guru, Yogarishi Yogashiromani Swamy Dr. Geetanand Giri, the internationally renowned scholar and Yogi. (courtesy : 'yoga life', journal, Published by Anand Ashram, Thattanchavady, Pondicherry)

—Editor

THE paeon to Bhujanga, the sacred cobra, had begun. The Nadaswaram twisted and turned in a serpentine melody across the floor, and seemed to lift and sway the dancer's body with its own strength. The mridangam beat the intricate Tala rhythm, slowly at first, then increasing in tempo. The singer was caught and wafted between the two, almost hypnotised. Full-throated he intoned the ancient invocation, "Nala Pambay...Nala Pambay." "O God Snake, O Holy Snake, be happy and smile and dance and play. Don't be angry with your devotees!" he entreated.

Saraswathi's eyes blazed with the fury of an aroused cobra, then in an instant, softened with the pleading of a terrified devotee seeking the compassion of a wrathful diety. Her arms became pliant and boneless, waving and writhing as the great Nagas coiled around Shiva's neck and shoulders were galvanized into activity as Nataraja danced his Cosmic dance. Who was that, there on the centre of the stage spotlighted by a single bare white light ? Who was that contorting her body into astounding shapes, defying the law of gravity and the restrictions of flesh and bone ? Where was the docile little teenager in those eyes which blazed the triumphant power of mind over matter, will over flesh, Divinity over ego ?

A thousand people sat without breath, transported into another dimension of consciousness, as Lord Shiva came to earth in the lithe young teenage body, lifting his right leg in triumph over the Asmara, the ego; holding his hand in Abhaya Mudra, soothing his devotees with his timeless gesture—fear not ! Head touched foot as the spine made a nearly complete circle. The Tandava, the Cosmic Dance of Shiva, had begun, and the floor shook with its force and power.

"O Good Snake," the singer pleaded. "Thou art the



Saraswathi

jewellery of Goddess Parvathi, the earrings of Lord Shiva. Upon thy beautiful body Lord Vishnu reclines. Thou holdest the Universe erect, O Holy One! Play and sing and be joyous! Don't be angry with us, thy devotees."

And the Bhujangas slithered and moved and multiplied upon the stage, as the bright-red-and-blue-costumed girl created a giant circle on her knees, with her hands in a fully-opened hood over her head, to the insistent, urgent rhythm of rapid intricate drum beats and writhing, sensuous notes of the long piped wind instrument, the Nadaswaram. The spotlight caught the flash of diamonds at her ears and hair and neck and wrists, but when the face was illumined, only the face of Bhujanga could be felt, fierce, powerful and wild. The tempo increased and the Nadaswaram became more shrill, more urgent in its demand. The singer's plaintive voice threaded itself between the drum and the pipe and led them both to the great demi-god Bhujanga rising out of the thin frail body of Saraswathi as she contorted and gestured, now Lord Shiva Himself, proud, bold, the Raja of the Cosmic Dance, then the helpless devotee, completely at the mercy of her Lord and his attendant, the Bhujanga, then transposing into the fierce, supple, boneless beauty of the great King Cobra as it moved through the Cosmos seeking its prey. The audience joined the musicians and the dancers, forging the third angle of the SACRED MANDALA—the observer and the observed and the process of observation. That Oneness expressed itself in a silence which rose out of the drum beats and the pipe's plaintive notes and the singer's full-throated voice. In that silence only One existed, and that One was Great ! That one was Goodness manifest ! Lord Shiva in his Cosmic Dance ! Saraswathi spun round and round on the stage, then rose suddenly to her feet and grasping her right leg lifted it straight to the sky, touching her ear with her foot in the Urdwa Thandava, the impossible 108th position of the Cosmic Dance of Lord Shiva. Her left hand rose over her head, fingers slightly bent to simulate a cobra's hood swaying and undulating like the sinuous body of Bhujanga, the great Cobra, lovingly entwined in the top knot of the Lord. Then the thunder struck, and the auditorium rocked with a thousand pairs of hands clapping with full force, non-stop in an ecstasy of sharing, of the recognition of greatness become manifest, of God became man, or man become God. Which was it ? Did it matter ? The transformation had occurred. And the thunderous ovation was witness. Lord Shiva stood with his leg raised in triumph for a Yuga, or less, then brought himself back to earth, graced his devotees with a benevolent Darshan and left the stage to the rhythm of Ta-Tey-Ta-Ha.

The audience broke into excited buzzing and again the clapping started, demanding another "Darshan" of the Divine Figure. This time, pushed out from the wings by the jubilant organisers, a young thin and frail, very shy teenage girl came hesitantly to the centre stage. Dressed in shiny red silk stitched into pants and blouse,

with a blue border rimming the sleeves, pant legs and midriff, she stood quietly, hands in Namaskaram. Her long black hair, plaited in a braid which reached her tailbone, was filled with jasmines and glittering jewellery. Three diamond necklaces adorned her neck and earrings shaped like bells hung from her ears. A gold belt encircled her tiny waist and the heavy bells on her ankles jingled. The sweat had streaked her makeup and black smudges could be seen around her eyes and on her cheeks. Her costume was drenched with sweat and her legs were trembling. She smiled, a white brilliant flash in the night, bowed low over the Namaskaram to the cheering audience, and escaped to the wings and the ministrations of her proud and happy Guru. The show was over. Lord Shiva and his Bhujangas retired for the night into their own Lokha and the humans tramped downstairs for refreshments.

Meenakshi and Swamiji whisked Saraswathi away from the admiring crowd which tried to mob them as they left the posh auditorium. "Who is that ?" a rickshaw walla asked with an open mouth, dazzled by the aura surrounding the young dancer, who wafted out of the door on the perfume of the evening's heady triumph. "A cinema star," Meenakshi said mischievously pushing Saraswathi hurriedly into their Ambassador car for a quick get-away. "Tamil cinema," she added as an afterthought, and they all laughed as the word spread like a bolt of lightning, through the denizens of the street, who jostled each other for a clearer look at the goddess come to earth. Swamiji reached over and patted—Saraswathi's hand, "You did beautifully tonight, Sarasu, the best ever !" They all felt high and the feeling persisted even through the late night celebration dinner at the town's best restaurant through the quiet drive home and the depositing of the little goddess at the door of her small mud hut. The clock had struck midnight for the happy Cinderella. "Good night, Swamiji! Good night Amma," the little conjurer said in sweet soft tones, and then ten hands quickly pulled her through the door, to protect her from the "Dristhi" which would surely surface if too many envious eyes saw that sparkling beauty.

Swamiji and she sat quietly for the remainder of the short drive to the Ashram. Later, after they had performed the final Arthi at the shrine, lit the evening incense, chanted the closing Mantras, and prepared for the evening's sleep they spoke some time in a quiet, joyous mood. The performance had a cathartic effect. Swamiji fell quickly asleep, but Meenakshi tossed and turned, unable to dismiss the evening from her mind, as though something remained undone, some loose threads remained untied. She rose from the bed and sat quietly in front of the family idol Vinayaga, chanting Gayatri Mantras appropriate for that deity.

Still her mind surged with ideas, partially formed, and exciting emotions.

The innate wisdom of the Hindu culture never ceased to amaze her, especially when she saw how powerful life patterns protected, shaped, gave meaning and dignity to every aspect of daily life. The attitude towards the cobra, for example, was so divinely practical? One encountered a cobra at nearly every step in the villages here in the south, in the fields, in the abandoned houses, under piles of leaves, sneaking their way through the long rice grass. Why, even here in their "civilized, cultivated garden", she spotted a cobra at least once a week. It was a stroke of cultural genius to create an aura of "holiness" about this most dangerous creature, conditioning the common people to regard it with respect and holiness, thus curbing their natural impulse to attack it and consequently provoke it to fight back. If the cobra felt violent vibrations, or emanations of hostility from the people, it would surely be forced in self defence to protect itself. If the villagers instead felt it a blessing to view a cobra, standing quietly, and respectfully as it passed, that peaceful attitude itself would insulate them from the cobra's wrath. She had never been bitten, had never even come close to it, though she lived day in and day out in a peaceful symbiosis with the beautiful reptile. The three ant hills standing almost five feet high in the various corners of the garden were really "apartment blocks" for thriving colonies of cobras. Their Pandit did a daily Puja at those ant hills, offering milk and sometimes eggs to the "good snakes." In return the cobras left them in peace.

And when they did, when the lines she drew in space and time intersected with those drawn by the cobra, they simply passed at a safe and simple distance. She herself was a great devotee of the Naga tribe, and had often watched the majestic dance of the king cobra as defying gravity, it drew itself up off the ground and blew open its hood, showing off the intricate pattern on its head, fascinating in its mystic beauty with its small eyes set within the horrendous frame, sinuous swaying from side to side warning its prey of the power at its disposal. The speed with which it moved was astounding. Of course the cobra was a favourite symbol with the Yogis, signifying as it did beauty and power and grace and flexibility. It also well illustrated the concept of dormant Kundalini Energy suddenly activated into a mind-boggling force. Kundalini, that untapped power house of energy stored in the base of the human spine, was usually represented as a coiled cobra. The great nerve chains, the right and left peripheral nerves Ida and Pingala, and the central nervous system, the Sushumna Nadi, were usually likewise symbolized by the cobra. It was easy to understand why when one watched the



dynamic power of the reptile's life.

It was a beautiful night, well past midnight, and Meenakshi savoured the night's solitude and stillness, watching the bright half moon smile from behind a few wisps of clouds, feeling the soft night breeze brush her cheeks. No, she had never really been afraid of cobras. She remembered well the day she had been sitting for meditation in the evening Sandhyam on the Mandala, when was it, it must be sixteen years ago now, for she was six months pregnant with Ananda at the time. She was sitting in Vajra Asana, on her heels, and enjoying a great peace and quietness, performing her Mantric Dharana. She had really been "lost to the world" deep in a contemplative, meditative state. The sun had set, and the rising coolness of the night had brought her back to the world of her senses, reminding her of her evening duties. She was about to rise from her position, when she felt something move slightly on her up turned soles. Curious, she turned and saw a young cobra lying across her feet, simply resting there, perhaps enjoying the energy currents she had created. She did not panic.

On the contrary, she had felt a deep love for the creature and remained immobile. But the change in her state of mind had been felt by the young reptile, and she felt it rustle across her feet and away. She caught a glimpse of it again, as it slithered off the Mandala, down the garden path and off under the trees. That had been her experience with the Goddess Kundalini externalised.

These were the loose threads she wanted to tie together. This was why she couldn't sleep this night. Little Saraswathi had stirred up a deep well of memories and she could not rest till they floated to the surface one by one and she retrieved them. This old culture had embraced so lovingly its Mother, the Earth Goddess, Bhumi Devi, and all the creatures which crawled and swam and walked and ran and flew upon its surface. Everything, every form of life, had its part to play in the whole fabric of Hinduism. Animal, plant, bird, fish, reptile, even insect life was all woven together, strung together like a garland of flowers, a Mala, to be used in worship to stimulate those Divine feelings without which the human spirit withers, dries up and blows away—wonder, awe, reverence the sacredness of all which manifests. Reverence for life was not a concept invented by Albert Schweitzer, deep in his African jungle. It was a cultural attitude fostered by the Hindus back through layers of time and history. Almost everything was sacred, almost every form of life had a role to play in a devout, religious spiritual existence. Almost everything was a symbol or a vehicle for the Divine Force in its universal sport. Thus man wove his existence into the fabric of the flora and the fauna of the Goddess Earth, and he was not separate from it, nor above it, nor below it, but a strand of it, inter-related, inter-dependent. Those attitudes grew up in an agricultural, rural, forest society, in a natural life lived in rhythm with its surroundings, where man was pliant and adapted himself and blended himself into the whole. Cobras and men could exist side by side in such a structure, each respecting the right of the other to live, each playing its own role in the general environment which supported that life.

Meenakshi looked up as a few drops of light rain fell against her face. The moon was occulted by a large, serpentine cloud, as through resonance to her thoughts. The white light radiated out from behind the cloud cover, and otherwise, the sky was clear and bright with stars. A blessing. An auspicious sign. She felt exhilarated and burst into the first line of the song Saraswathi had danced so exquisitely earlier this evening, "Nalla Pambu Naga mudi mel errukkuu Nala Pambu" "O Good Snake, you are intertwined in the top knot of Lord Shiva Himself." Meenakshi twisted her hands over her head, outlining with the traditional Bharat Natyam Mudras the shape of Lord Shiva's hair and the cobras entwining themselves about his head.



She bent her fingers slightly and put her hands together, holding them aloft like a cobra's full blown hood and twirled round and round singing the hypnotic line over and over, as the soft rain fell all around. The moon moved out from behind the cloud as though desiring to see the show, and perhaps, deep in the orchard, under the leaves, and inside of the ant hills, the King Cobra stirred in his sleep. Perhaps, perhaps, he was pleased by the age-old vibrations emanating from the first floor of the Ashram rooftop. Perhaps now he would smile and play and be happy and not show anger at those silly humans who co-inhabited his space on the planet. "Nala Pambu" was the last thought Meenakshi had for the night before she fell to sleep. Outside all was silent. The earth was filled with "Shanti" and all beings, even the great and fierce Nagas, were happy and at their ease. □



Mukul Sharma and Rakhi in Paroma—Direction: Aparna Sen

Do We Have a Parallel Cinema ?

—SHOMA A. CHATTERJI

“SO strong and widespread is the hold of the intellectual conventions of commercial cinema on the public, that any filmmaker who ignores them has also to abandon the hope of quick success.”—Satyajit Ray in *CINEMA VISION*, July, 1970.

Do we have a parallel cinema? Obviously, we do have a parallel cinema but today, it is in a sad state because its exhibition is restricted either to film festival screenings or to screenings on the small screen in the usual Sunday slot. We began the movement about 25 years ago, almost imperceptibly and unwittingly, perhaps with the seed sown with Satyajit Ray's "Pathar Panchali". The small seed took root, and sprouted a small sapling, with the leaves spreading out slowly and surely... Mrinal Sen's "Bhuvan Shome", Ray's trilogy that began with "Pathar Panchali" and ended with "Apar Sansar", Avtar Kaul's "27 Down", M.S. Sathyu's "Garm Hawa", Hritwik Ghatak's "Jukti Takko Aar Gappo", Basu Chatterjee's "Sara Akaash", Basu Bhattacharya's "Anubhav" and so on. The movement spread to all areas of the country and did not remain confined within Bengal and Maharashtra. Malayalam cinema's landmark was "Chemmeen" directed by the late Ramu Kariat in 1965 which, however, was a more popular adaptation of Thakazhi's famous novel. The real breakthrough in New Cinema in Malayalam came with Adoor

Gopalakrishnan's "Swayamwaram" in 1972. A little earlier, Girish Karnad brought new promise to the annals of Kannada cinema with "Samsakara" in 1970 directed by Pattabhi Rama Reddy, followed by M.T. Vasudevan Nair's "Nirmalyam" in 1973, B.V. Karanth's "Chomana Dudi" in 1976, and so on.

What exactly does one mean by New Cinema or Parallel Cinema? Does it indicate merely low-budget films for a discerning audience? Not really though that is what Mrinal Sen once suggested in relation to New Cinema. This cannot be correct because the term "low-budget" is a time-relative as the term "discerning audience" is subjective. New Cinema also, has to be economically viable if it is to continue as a form of entertainment, information and education. It cannot and does not exist in a vacuum. New Cinema is essentially small-budget because it has no choice...it cannot afford to be as big-budget as the mainstream cinema. But that is just one small fragment of the whole story. New Cinema is two-fold in its aim...one, it aims to use cinema as an art form, as a form of artistic and a creative self-expression similar to other art forms like painting, sculpture, music et al. Two, in order to establish its identity as an art form, it must remove itself from the stereotype of commercial cinema whose only business is to rake in the bluebacks with entertainment provided

through any and every gimmick in the book...the star-system, music, colour, grand and out-of-the-world sets, picturesque locales, dances, fights, all pegged on to one or the other of a dozen, slender and typical story-lines with romance and conflict and tears thrown in. So, New Cinema does not adhere to any of the usual gimmicks that the commercial cinema thrives in. The attempt to veer away from what has been handed down for years together may seem self-conscious in the beginning, but it has to be so in order that the movement be sustained. There is yet a *third* angle to New Cinema. And that is, using the cinema medium to raise social consciousness against some social evil that ails the society. In this case, cinema becomes the means to an end and ceases to be an end in itself. This brings about a stratification among the directors of New Cinema in the sense that some use the cinema as an art form... cinema becomes both the means and the end. This is what we have mostly come across in the films of Ray. Except for a couple of his later films like "Seemabaddha", "Pratidwandi" and "Jana Aranya" where Ray did take up some of the contemporary socio-economic problems and make them into a cinematic issue of sorts; almost all his films have been works of art. Many critics have ascribed this to the fact that Ray is firstly an artist and only then a filmmaker. But even his lesser-publicised film like "Kanchenjunga" was described as a "poem in celluloid" and no one felt like disputing the advertiser's copy even in 1962.

Sen, on the other hand, uses cinema as a means to an end...to identify a social problem, or to juxtapose a natural calamity of the past with the man-made one in the present as he did with his "Akaaler Sandhaane",

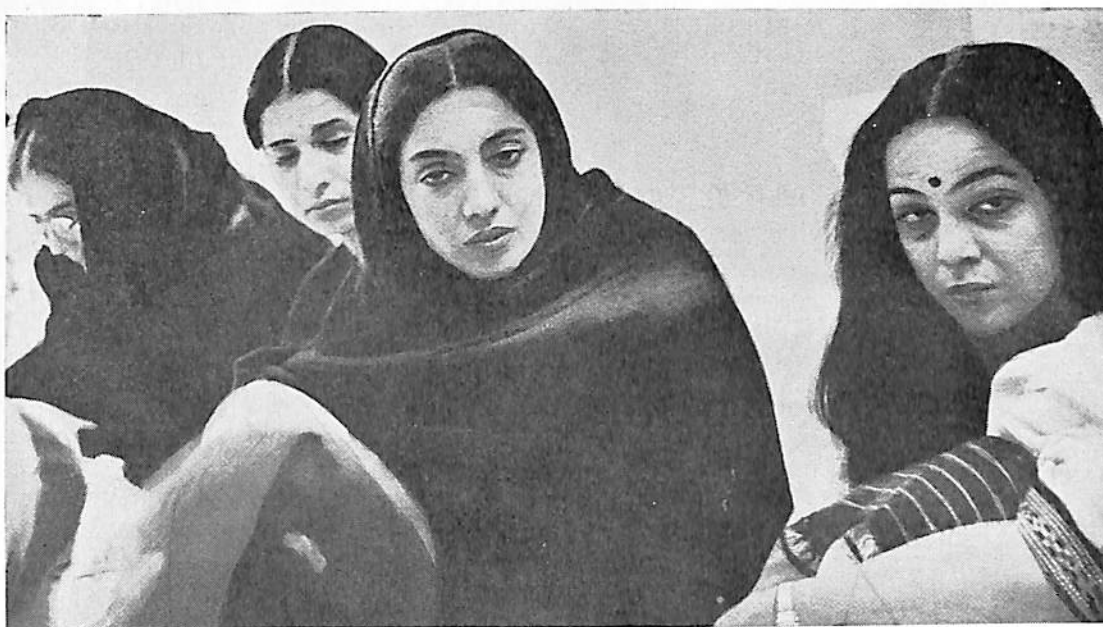
Smita patil in "DEBSHISHU"



Director Ketan Mehta of "Mirch Massala"

but he does not necessarily suggest a solution to the problem he chooses to focus his camera on. His films are statements of facts, but the statements are made bluntly yet, creatively and with his own distinct stamp of originality. All the latter-day film-makers in the New Cinema genre, fall in either of these two groups. Not that a social message is always consciously put across or is preconceived at the time the film has been scripted. Sometimes, it so happens that during the film itself, a message gets to be said...it just happens though the director has not conceived of the film in this way earlier. This is what happened to Aparna Sen when she was making her first directorial venture, "36, Chowringhee Lane".

There have been about three film-makers who do not conform to the above-mentioned genre of directors and are yet, extremely original in their own way...they have brought about and have boldly experimented with a radical departure in the 'form' of cinema whereas,



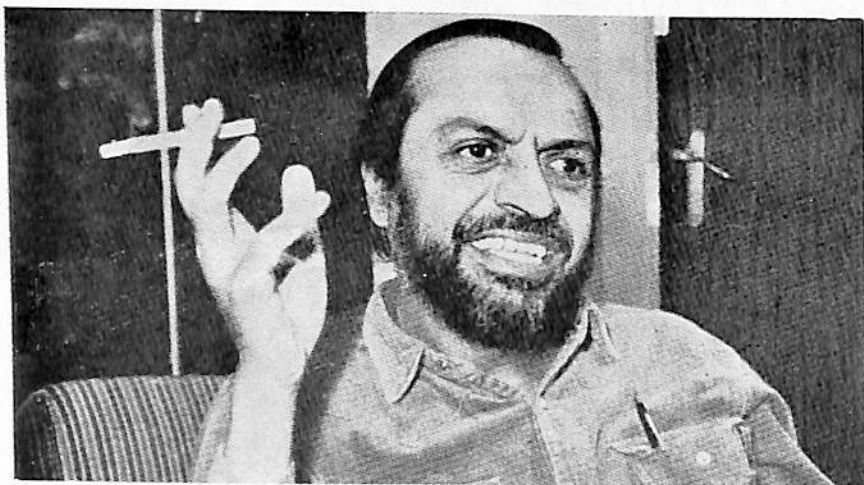
Shabana Azmi in Muzaffar Ali's "ANJUMAN"

the other directors have remained more or less content with their experimentation with the *content* of cinema. Who are these three very different film-makers? They are...the late Hritwik Ghatak, Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani, who brought in a radical transformation through their films. Of course, even the so-called discerning cinema-audiences could not receive their films. But that was because the Indian audience is not acclimatised to this kind of form in cinema. A change in content, away from the stereotype is acceptable, even appreciably, specially after it wins accolades at foreign film festivals. But a change in form such as in Mani Kaul's "Uski Roti" which moves at a very slow pace, and focusses only on a woman baking roties for her driver husband and waits for him on the roadside, never mind whether he chooses to halt for the night or not, is really difficult for an 'uneducated' audience to digest. "Uneducated" in the sense that it is totally alien to such change in form. Similarly, in Kumar Shahani's "Maya Darpan" or the much-later-made film "Tarang" which he describes as an epic-film, the form has come in for a great deal of experimentation and so, mostly went above the heads of the audience...even that audience which patronises good cinema. Why? Is it meaningful to make films even in the New Cinema genre just for home-viewing? Does New Cinema fulfil its aim by remaining in the cans forever? What would then, be the means of subsistence of its makers? These are the relevant questions that need to be raised.

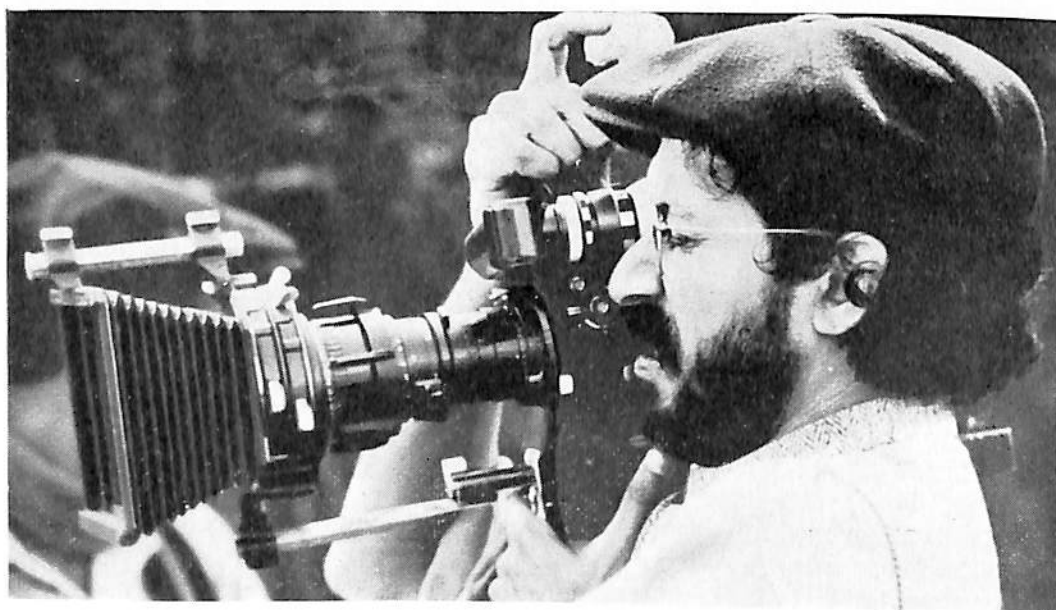
Ray said once: "If I were asked what has been my main preoccupation as a filmmaker, I should say it has been to find out ways of investing a story with organic cohesion, and filling it with detailed and truthful observation of human behaviour and relationships in a given milieu and a given set of events, avoiding stereotypes and stock situations, and sustaining interest visually, aurally and emotionally by a judicious use of the human and technical resources at one's disposal".

Said the noted critic Chidananda Das Gupta about these films, most of which have formed the essence and the life-spirit of the Indian Panorama at the Film Festival in India every year: "Many an otherwise striking film has been ruined by loose, meandering narratives such as "Ramnagari" (1983), "Gaman" (1981), even highly-praised films like "Bhavni Bhavai" (1980) and "Albert Pinto Ko Gussa Kyon Aata Hai" (1980) are not free from self-indulgence. But to do justice to these filmmakers, one must add that most of them have made formidable progress towards tighter narratives and proportionate structures. The good ground covered by Buddhadeb Das Gupta for example, from "Dooratwa" (1978) to "Grihajuddha" (1981) is quite remarkable; so is Sayeed Mirza's from "Arvind Desai Ki Ajeeb Dastan" (1978) to "Mohan Joshi Hazir Ho" (1984)).

The New Cinema for a long time now, has been the NFDC's baby. In spite of the brickbats hurled at it from time to time, ranging from misorganisation, to poor distribution outlets, to parochialism in doling out funds, to corruption at the top level, the NFDC has financed



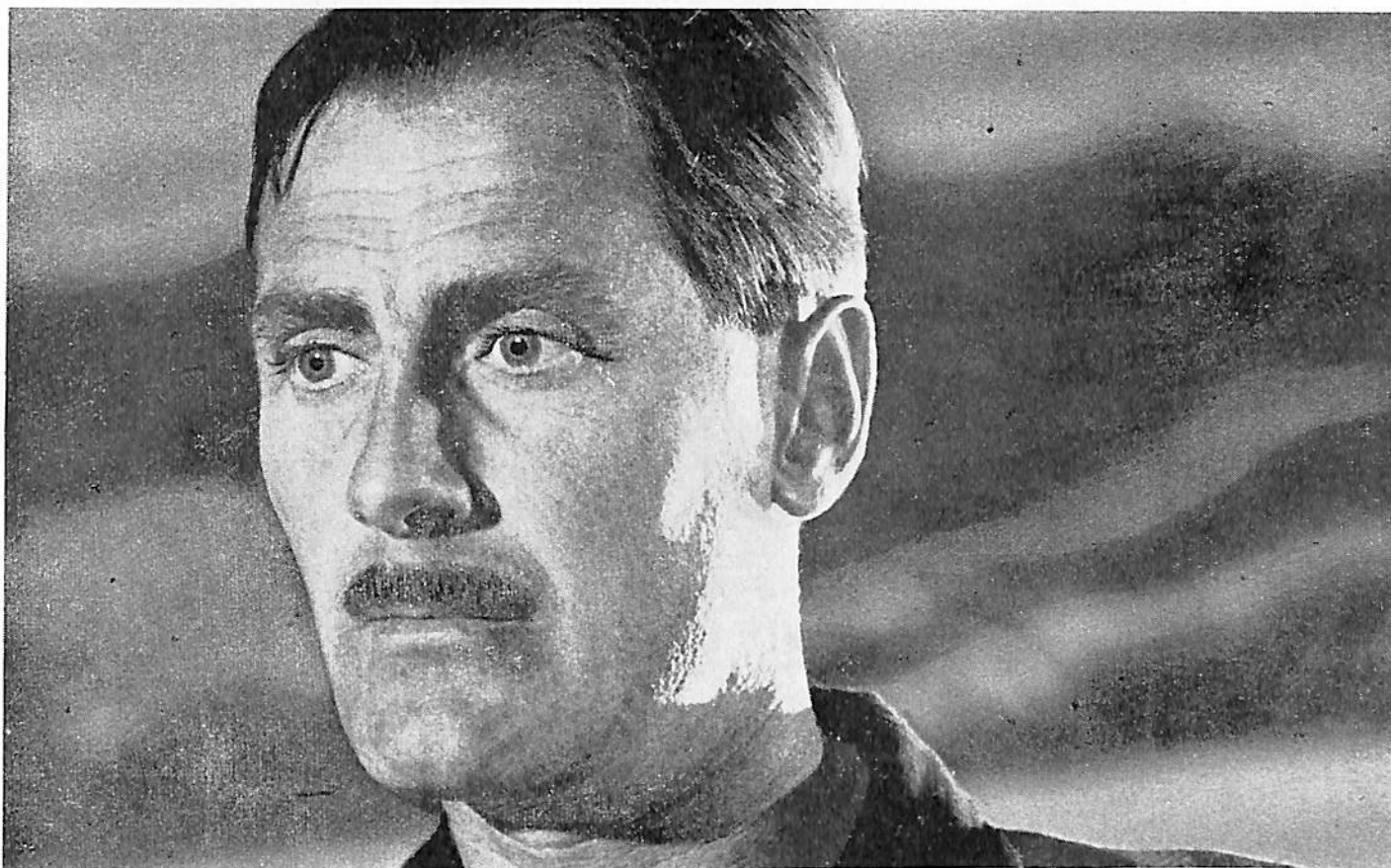
Shyam Benegal



Director Pradip Krishna of 'Massey Sahib'



A Scene from Tapan Sinha's "ATANKA"



Barry John in Massay Sahib

and supported the New Cinema. The New Cinema has a small audience in India, and the prospects of screening...later being sold, to countries abroad with a more discerning audience than our own. What both the new Cinema-makers and the Govt. agree upon is this: the New Cinema can succeed only if there are parallel channels of distribution such as separate cinema houses for exhibiting those films. For 15 years, the Govt. has been promising to build small theatres for such films. The "Akashvani" theatre in Bombay was begun with this noble intent. But today, this theatre is a dilapidated structure standing outside the Mantralaya building, exhibiting very low-grade films from abroad.

Filmmaker Kumar Shahani has said: "there was not as great an awareness of what we were doing as there is today. Not enough importance was given to the market as there should have been given. Individual filmmakers have had to find individual solutions. But even that is changing, because now everyone is definitely thinking of the problem of distribution. In fact, the shift in emphasis is so much, that I fear that there might be a time when there would be art theatres everywhere with no enough films made to show them there."

Today, however, the problem of distribution has

partly been solved by another, unlikely, but inescapable outlet...TV. All films of New Cinema that do not get a regular release, are shown on the regular Sunday slot for the commercial Hindi film. But is this desirable? From the basis of "something is better than nothing"; it is fine. From the point of the films reaching a massive audience, this is positively good. But what *kind* of audience? What kind of screening on a small screen for a film that has been made with a wider canvas in mind? Are we not forcing the audience to watch what they would largely prefer not to? Are we also not offering them the free choice to switch off their sets as they are not paying for the film and are free to exercise their choice?

I would like to end this by quoting what Iqbal Masud has to suggest about the distribution of these films through theatres and not through TV: "If NFDC makes an honest effort to set up and work a chain of alternate theatres of 40/500 capacity, I have a feeling that these films have a good chance of succeeding. Firstly, the budgets are not exorbitant and secondly, they can become the instruments of change in building audience taste for the New Cinema."

□



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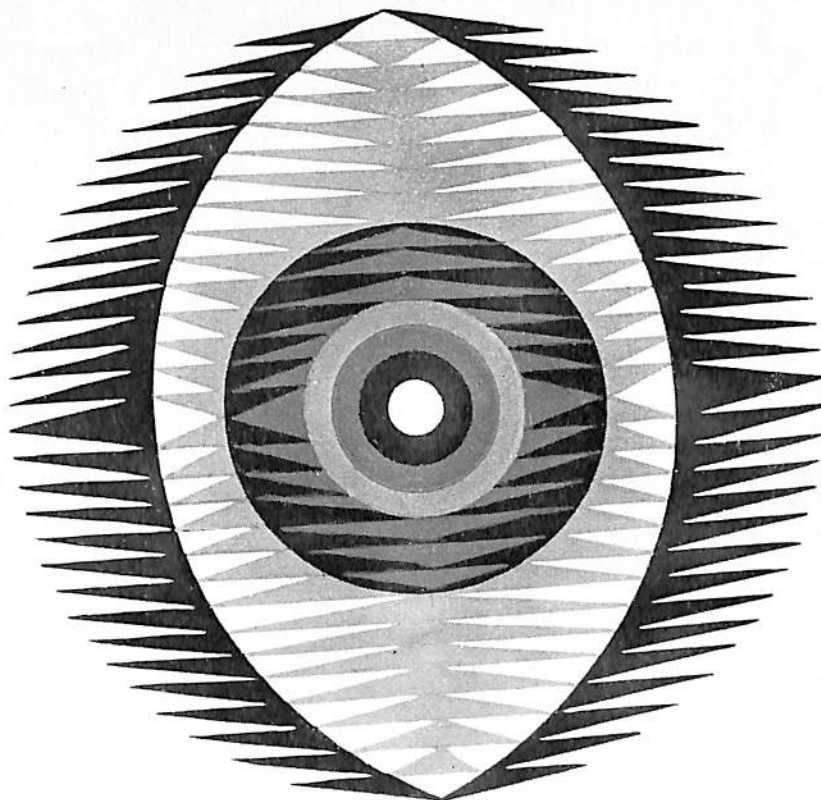
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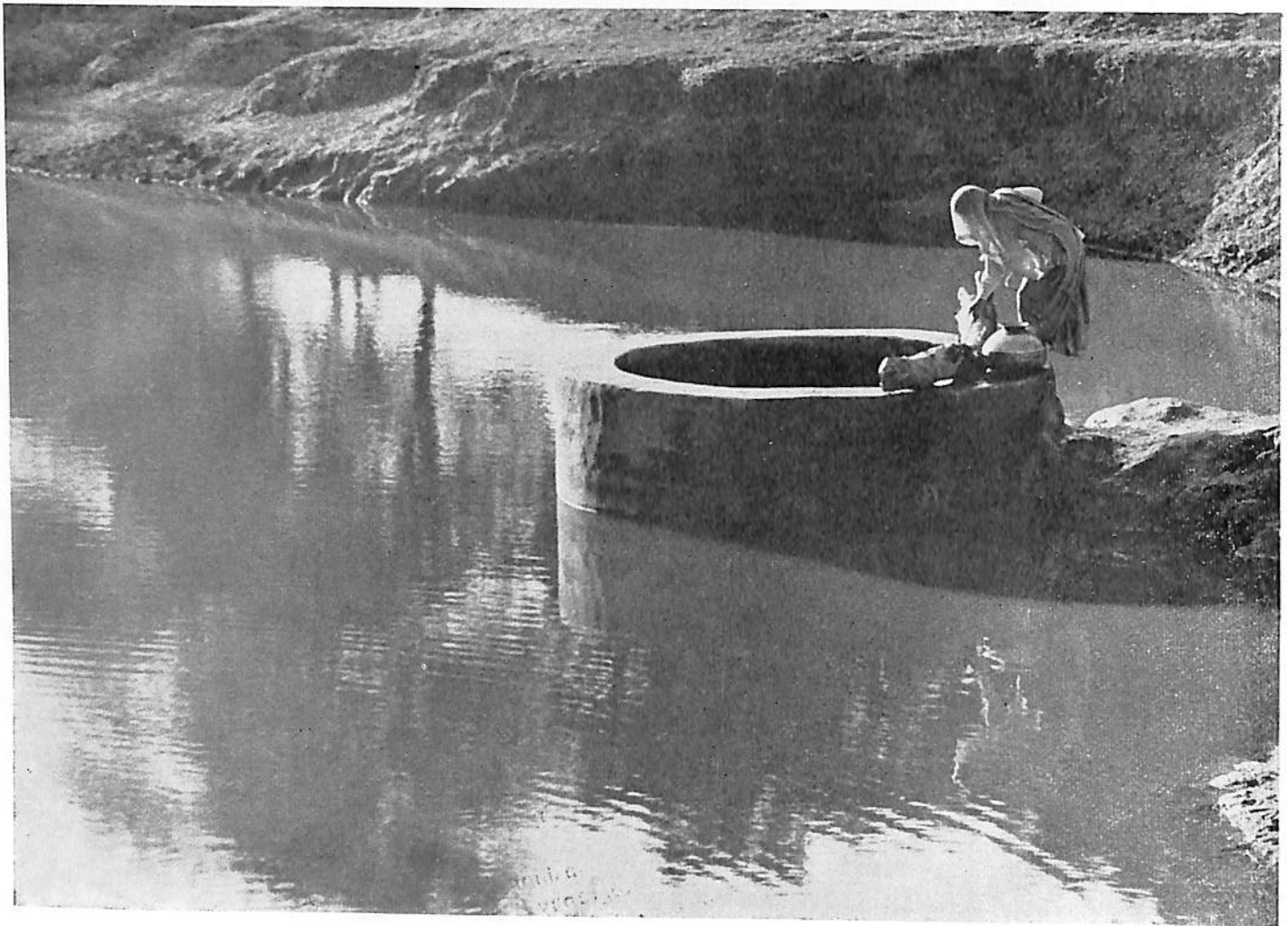
Director : RAVI JAIN

Creative Photography



“Everything old is not invariably good, nor anything new in poetry or art is bad. The discerning savant selects the right ones after critically examining the different forms while the undiscerning imitates what has been laid down by others”

**—Kalidas in his Drama:
Malvikagnimitram**



Well Veiled

Photography Today

—Text and photographs by T. KASI NATH

PHOTOGRAPHY was discovered in the year 1839. Plans are afoot in different parts of the world including India to celebrate the 150th. year of its discovery in 1989. During its early period, photography caught the attention of only those who had an artistic bent of mind. The newly discovered medium helped the creative artist to express himself differently. Soon, a stage was reached when photography became a real threat to creative painting.

Slowly, photography began to make inroads into other fields. Today, photography finds its application in almost every branch of human activity. Be it advertising, architecture, crime detection, fashion, industry, medicine, or scientific research, photography has made a significant contribution. It will not be possible to discuss all aspects here.

I am pursuing photography more as an art form than as a means of livelihood. I will, therefore, confine my attention to photography purely as a medium of self-expression.

Aim & Shoot

'Aim & Shoot' is today's slogan on which camera sales are flourishing. The introduction of the small camera with a built-in flash, in which the buyer is advised to point the camera at his subject and shoot, is largely responsible for the lowering of standards in present-day photography.

In contrast, cameras manufactured at the turn of the century, were large in format. It took a lot of time for the photographer to set up his camera and make one exposure. But that did not deter the true camera artist

KALA DARSHAN

from going about his business of picture-making in a leisurely manner. Some of them produced master-pieces which have stood the test of time. Those photographs are treasured today as gems of photographic art.

Great Masters

What makes a photographer great? Not one photograph, but many taken with consistency and skill at different intervals. A great photographer must have mastery over the camera. His photographs must have universal appeal and they must be timeless.

In England, there was Alex Keighly (1861-1947), a pictorialist of great merit. Many of his famous landscapes were made with a box camera. I wonder if England has produced another Keighly.

America boasts of Edward Weston (1886-1958) and Ansel Adams. Weston's photographs of nature taken during the '20s and '30s are in demand even today. Ansel Adams' photograph "Moonrise over Hernandez", Mexico, was first sold in New York in 1941 for a record sum of \$ 12,000. Later, the same photograph was sold for \$ 15,000, setting yet another record.

Who has not heard of the noted portrait photographer Yousuf Karsh of Ottawa. His portraits of great personalities including that of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, are known the world over. Many photographers have tried to imitate Karsh, but none has excelled him.

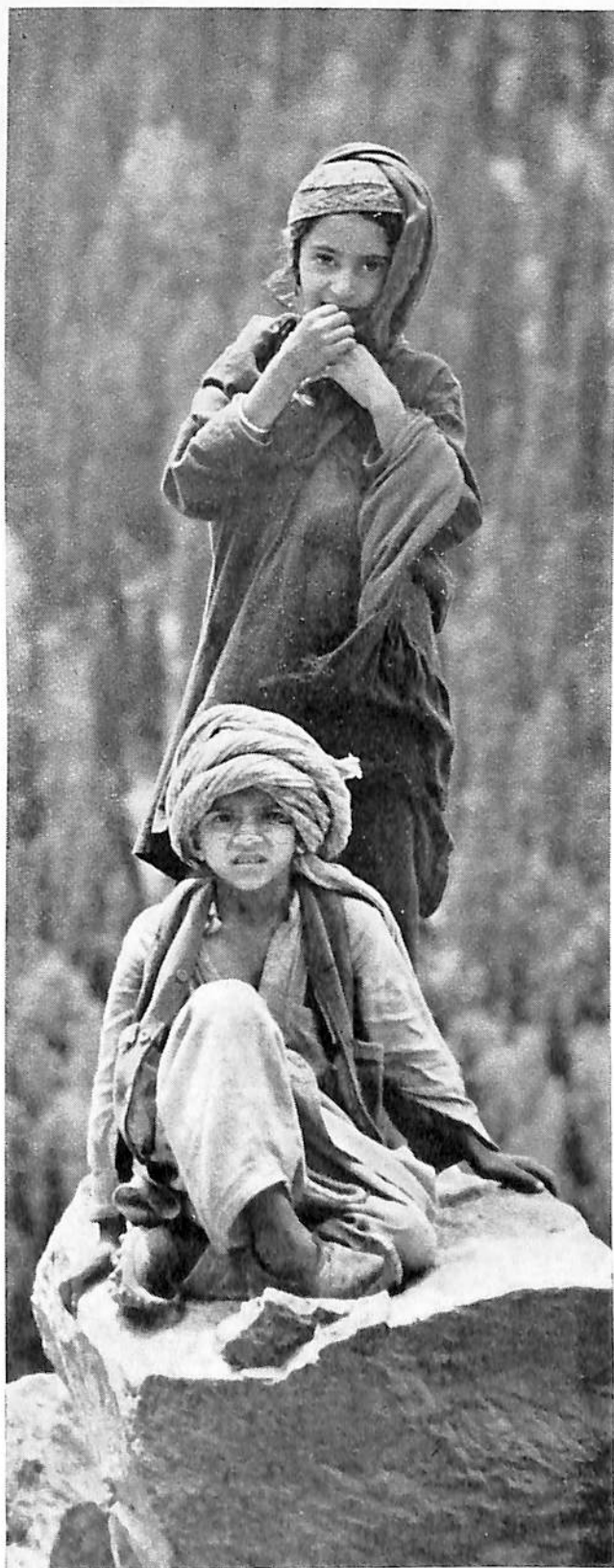
In our country, we had the late J.N. Unwalla, the father of Indian photography, who had achieved international reputation and was ranked among the top ten photographers of the world even before India became independent. He was the greatest Indian photographer I could name. We may never have another Unwalla.

In the death of R.R. Bharadwaj, Kishore Parekh and Mitter Bedi, the country has become poorer in photographic talent. There are other photographers who have carved out a niche for themselves, but their number is small.

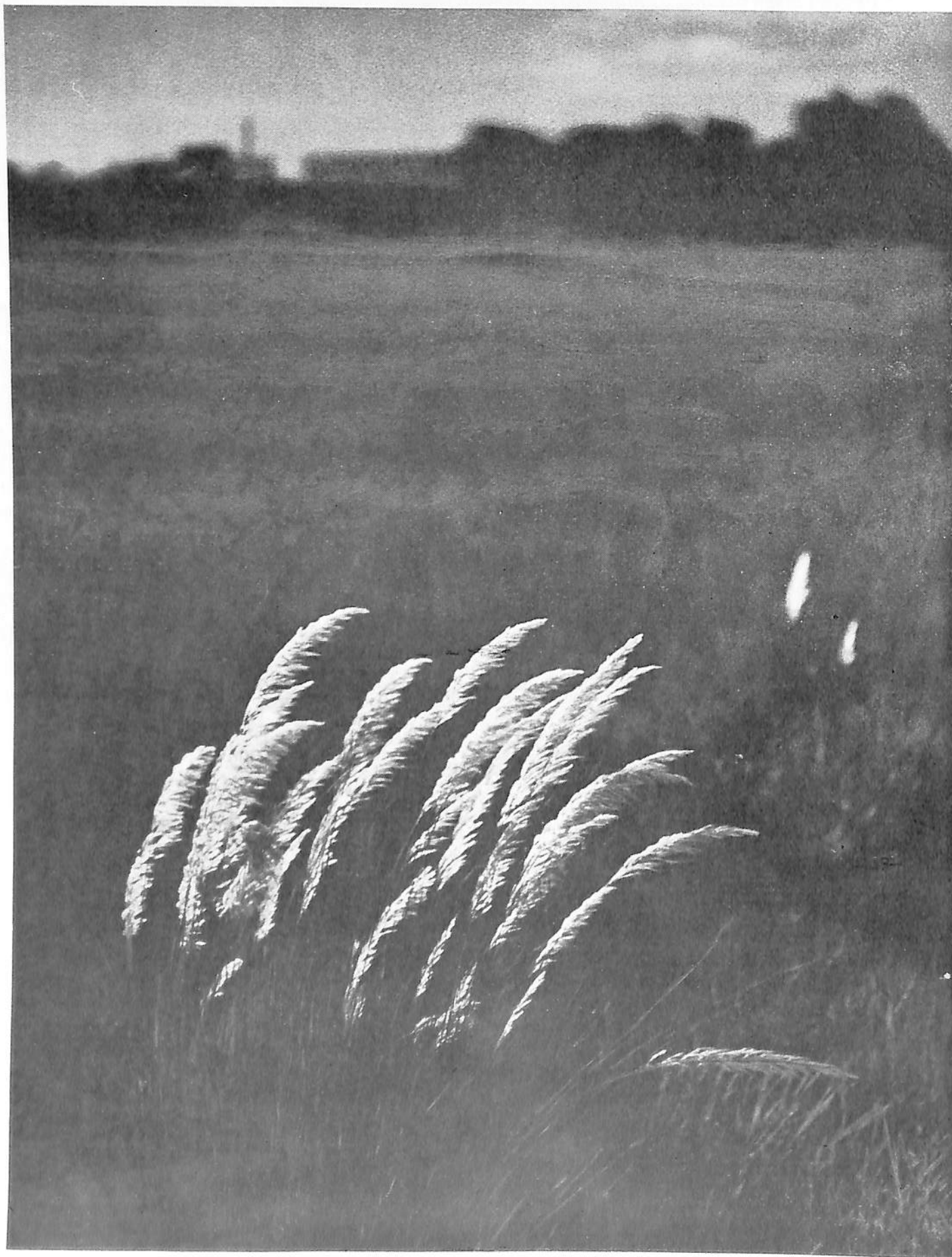
I am not attempting to paint a gloomy picture. We have among contemporary Indian photographers, S. Paul and his brother Raghu Rai, who can be ranked among the best photographers in the world today.

Computerised Cameras

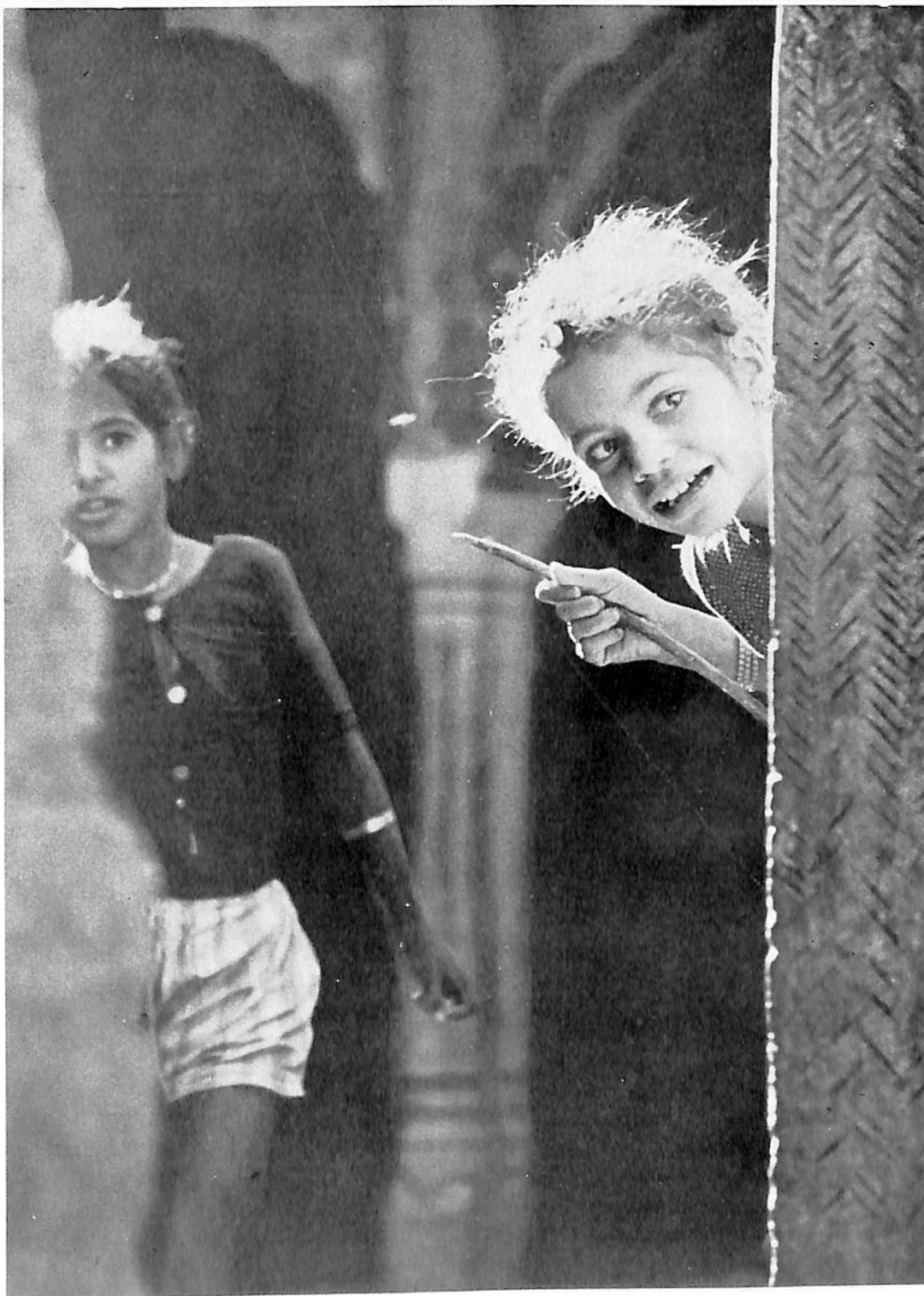
In the early days, the camera manufacturers had the user in mind. They were making cameras to meet his requirements. The camera was a slave in his hands. But today, the camera is fully automatic. Manufacturers are incorporating many new features in their cameras and are flooding them in the market, giving no choice to the poor user who has become a slave to it. The computerised camera has taken away that element of creativity which is so essential for picture-making. As a consequence,



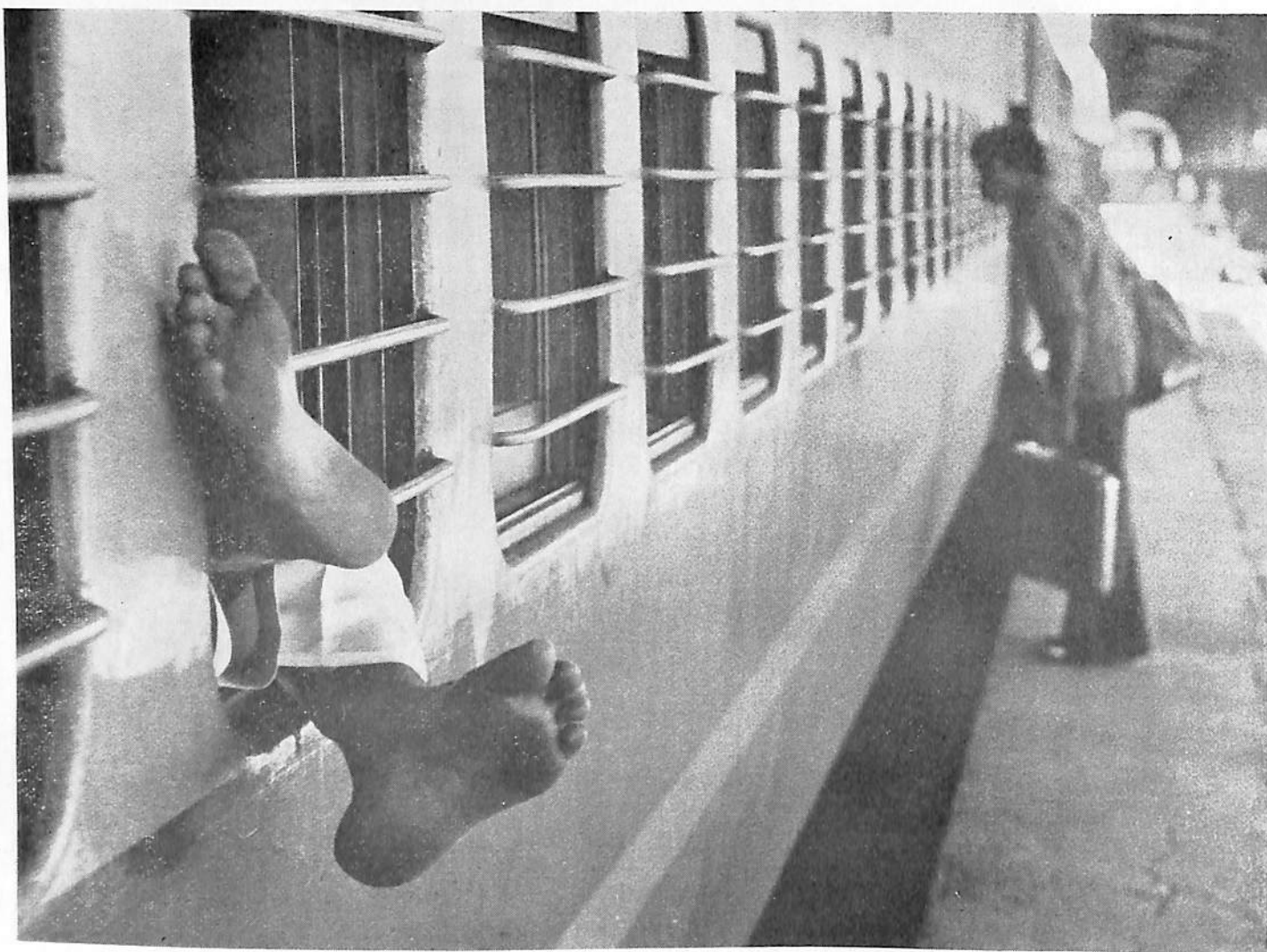
Gujar Girl and Boy



A Lyric



Has he gone ?



Sorry, No Accommodation

we have more button-pushers than creative camera artists.

The Scene Today

The scene today is vastly different from what it was a couple of decades ago. In spite of the high cost of cameras there is no dearth of buyers. Today's neo-rich-amateur equips himself with the most modern camera available in the market. Adds an array of lenses and accessories to his already bulging camera bag. He is firmly of the view that possession of a costly camera ensures success, forgetting that it is not the camera, but the man behind it that is responsible for the production of good photographs. He shoots half-a-dozen to a dozen rolls in quick succession and is in a hurry to hold a one-man show. Nothing can be more suicidal than this. The response from the Press and the public is cold. He feels discouraged and gives up his new hobby in desperation.

I am invited to act as a judge for a number of All India and International Exhibitions of Photographic Art in different parts of the country. In most of the places, I come in contact with a cross-section of this new breed of photographers flaunting their latest equipment. After the judging is over, I discover that none of the photographs entered by them is selected for exhibition. I ask them to pull out their prints from the rejected pile. I take a close look at them. Tears roll down my cheeks.

Lack of facilities to learn the finer aspects of picture-making, lack of recognition from Government, and lack of encouragement from the Press, are all responsible for the present state of affairs. However, thanks to the existence of a few Photographic Societies in all the major cities, the art of photography has been kept alive. I fondly hope that things will not be like this for long. A day must come soon when we too can boast of many creative camera artists of a high calibre. □

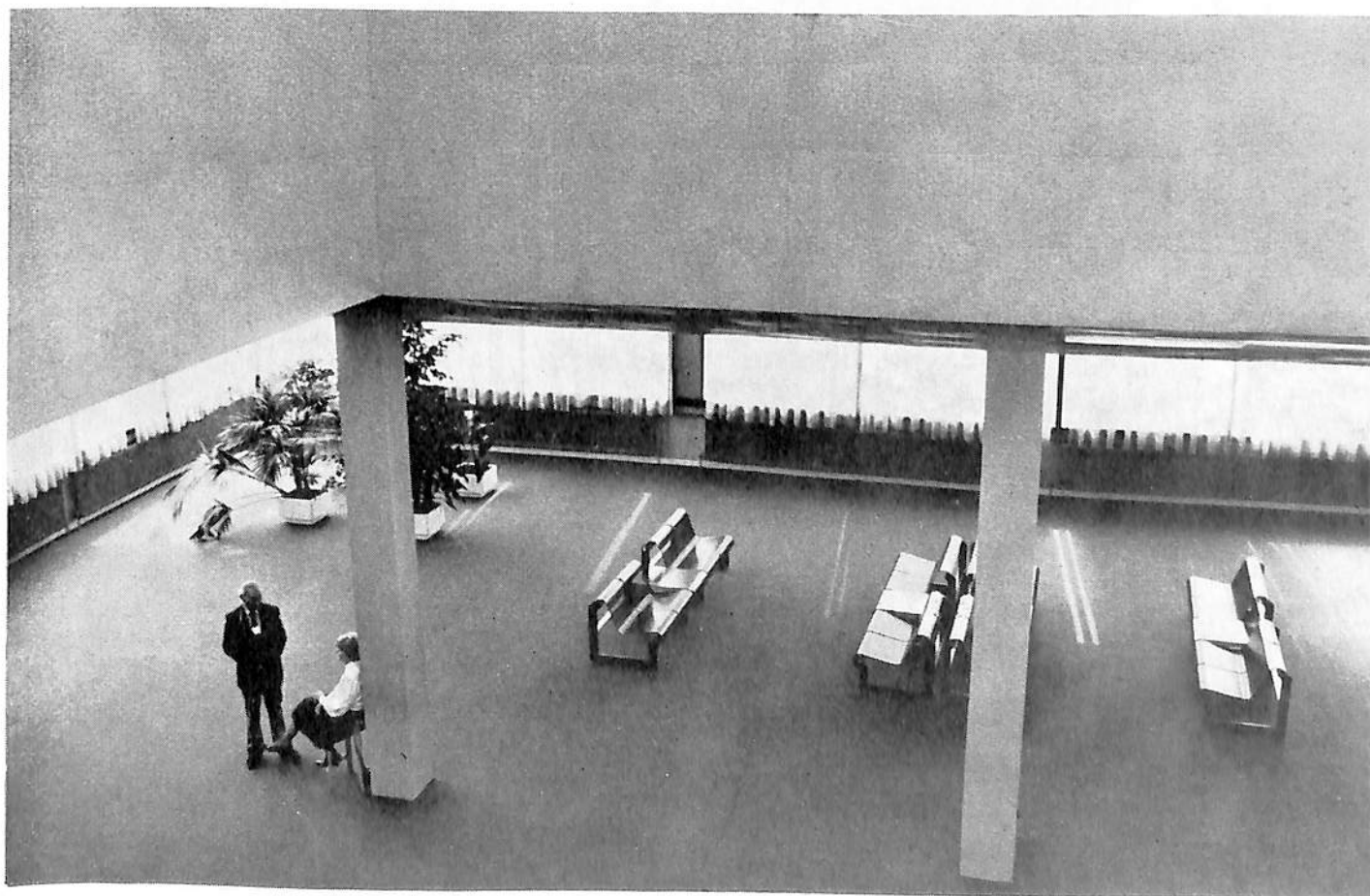
Compositions

—A Day at Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam

—JAGDISH AGARWAL

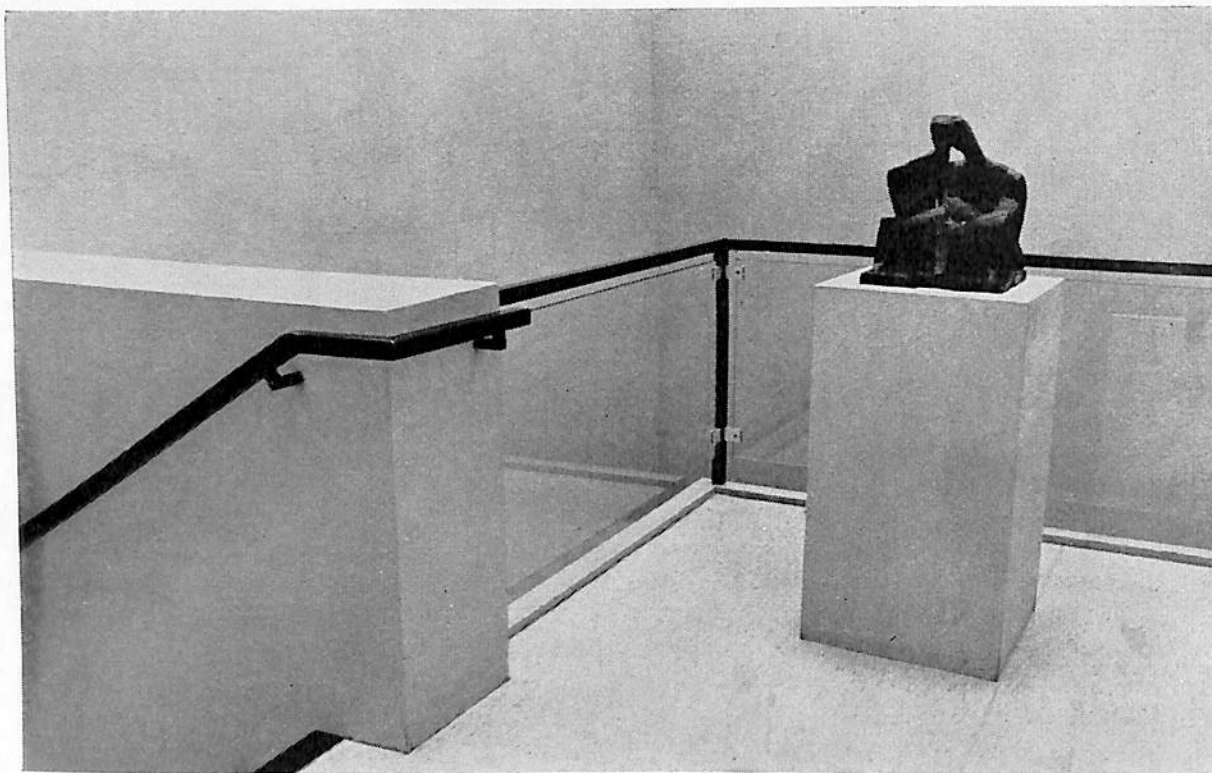
Jagdish Agarwal is one of our noted photographers who has also dabbled in Painting, poetry and prose writing in Hindi and English Languages. But photography had a firm grip on him and he took to this art seriously since 1964. For his innovative work with a keen sense of composition and an artist's eye, he has received many awards in the photographic competitions in the country as well as abroad. His solo show at the Southers Light Gallery, U.S.A. organised during the Festival of India in the States showed Jagdish as a consummate photographer; his compositions attracted wide attention.

—Editor

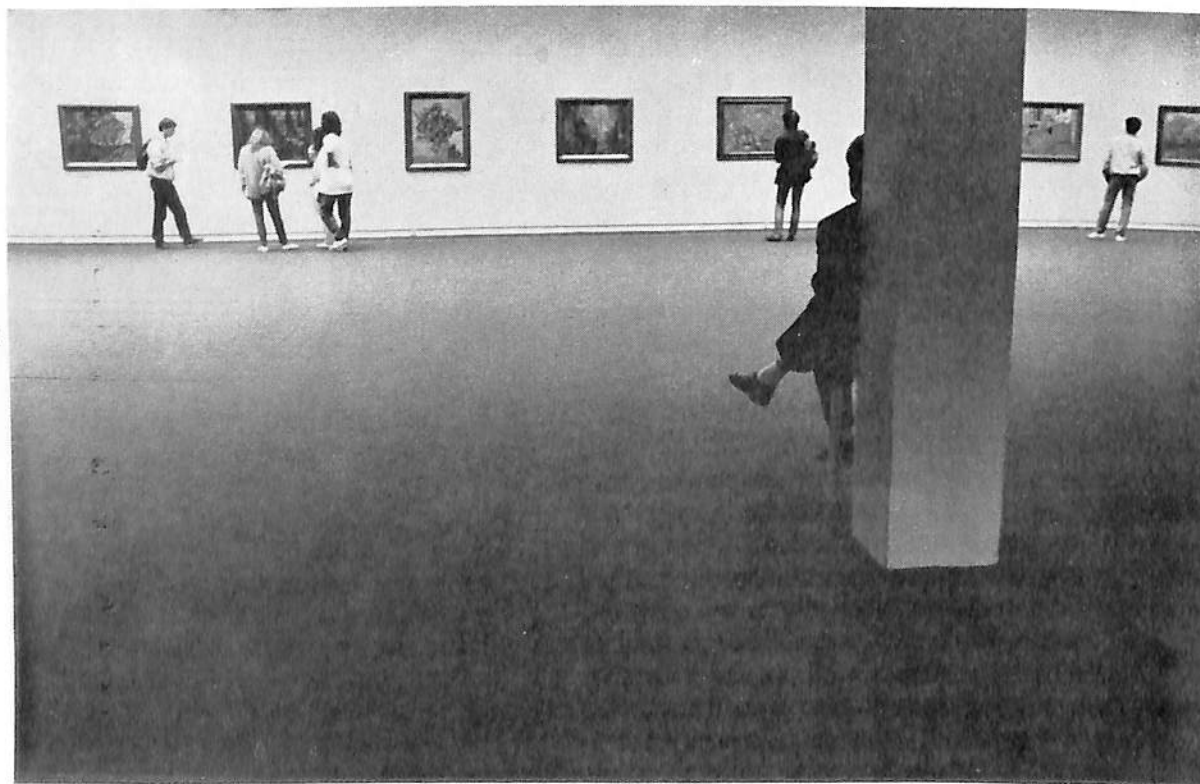


An Unusual Angle

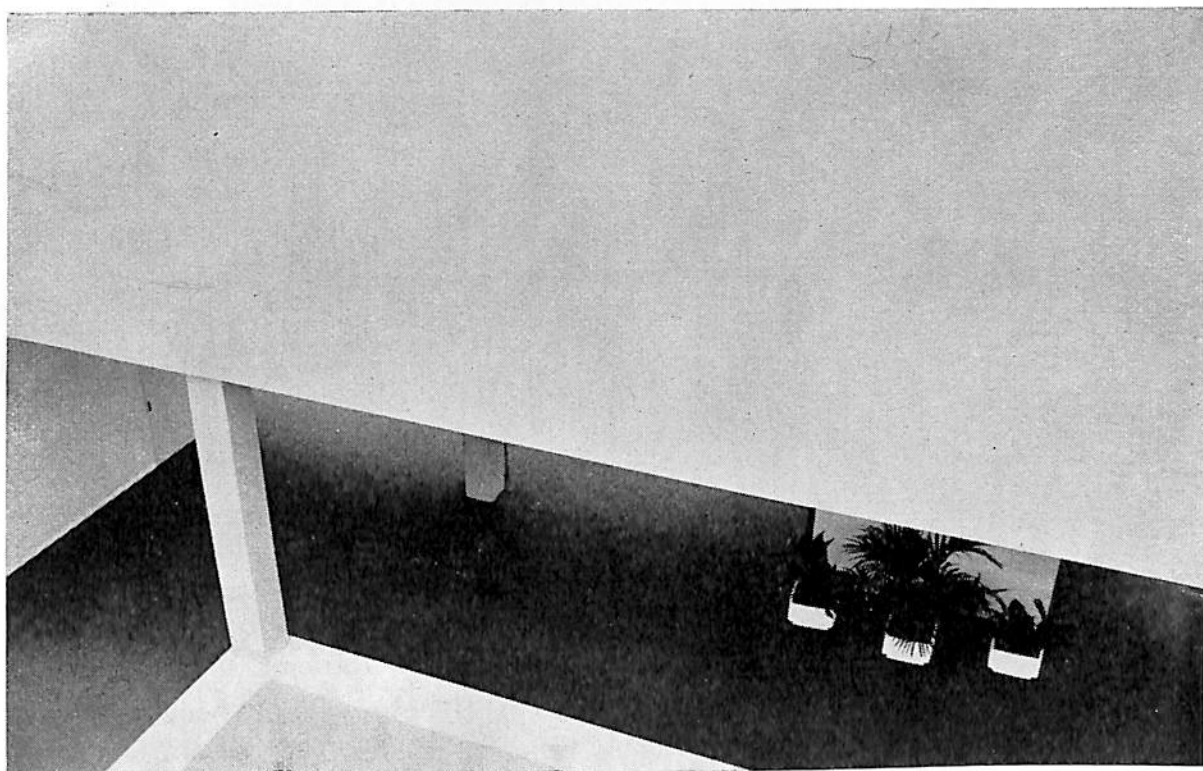
JANUARY-MARCH, 1988



The lone watcher



The Gallery—Spirit of Van Gogh



Focus of Interest



Pause a while !

JANUARY-MARCH, 1988

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Creative Writing



“Many think of art as a mere diversion, a thing that is purely marginal to the real business of life, they do not see that it looks into life’s very heart and lays bare its unconscious secrets, that it contains the most honest confessions, confessions that have within them the least element of calculation and therefore be accounted exceptionally sincere”

—Rene Hughe

The Mighty Word 'Foreign'

—M.K. NAIK

"In the beginning was the Word", says the Bible, "and the Word was with God". In India today, the word which is now God, is that mighty word, 'Foreign'. It is a word which was not 'in the beginning', but is certainly now the last word in fashion; a word which is so frequently hurled by society ladies at each other; a word of words round which whirls the entire world of snobbery. It is not for nothing that this word, 'Foreign' contains exactly seven letters, for Seven has always been a magic number, hallowed by its associations—both oriental and occidental—with the seven seas, the seven sleepers, the seven sages, the seven champions of Christendom, the seven sorrows of Mary, the seven deadly sins and the seven wonders of the world—a list which already makes up seven sevens.

"Bright is the ring of words when the right man rings them", said Stevenson; but 'Foreign' is a word the ring of which is musical to all Indian ears, even when rung by people who have no music in their souls, by those the only music who know is the jingle of illicit gold biscuits and the rustle of smuggled dollars notes. Strange is the alchemy of this magic word, 'Foreign'. It suddenly adds inches to your social stature. You have only to mention casually in company that your T.V., or tie or nylon sari is imported and you instantly find that telltale gleam of admiration and envy in the eyes of your friends, which is the inevitable tribute paid by those who can be content with mere Indian-made stuff to the superior beings whose tastes like those of Oscar Wilde are extremely simple—they are 'satisfied with the best!'

This current craze for anything of foreign make is not confined to luxury goods alone; it extends far and wide—from T.V.s to travel, clothing to climate and things to thoughts. Thus, we are firmly convinced that all worthwhile ideas and theories are born today only in foreign soil, and that all our thinking stopped finally and fully with the Middle ages. Hence the tremendous prestige we attach to a foreign degree, even when it is a fourth class or consolation degree from an obscure Western University, which we automatically hold superior to a first class degree from a good Indian University.

Hence again the muddle that our education system is today, wherein instead of clearly spelling out what our needs actually are, and how best they can be met, we have

been importing educational patterns from the West, and these too ironically enough, almost a generation after they have been tried and discarded there. For example, for a number of years, the Grammar and Translation Method was followed in our school, for the teaching of English. Then we imported the shining new axe of the Direct Method, which was already somewhat shop-soiled by the time it reached Indian shores. "Close your grammars and open your lips" was our slogan for quite sometime until we realized that the Direct Method had failed us. That the same is true of our higher education is clear from the fact that while we have now accepted the PhD as the highest academic degree, in the West from which the entire PHD business has been imported is already having second thoughts on the subject and we shall no doubt follow suit in due course. Again, it is precisely for this reason that foreign experts are in such great demand in India. Indigenous knowhow is always supposed to be incapable of delivering the goods until strongly supported by some foreign expert, with whom it is mostly a case of 'He Came, He saw (that is, saw the Taj Mahal) and He Concurred'. Not until the foreign expert has been paid thousands for saying much the same thing as the Indian expert was saying; are we satisfied that the job has been well and truly done.

What is true of Science and technology is also true of literature, the simple equation being, to be modern is to be Western. As a result, inept and half-baked, and often unacknowledged adaptations of the latest foreign 'isms' pass for 'Modernism' in the Indian languages today. How many brilliant literary reputations in India would crumble if the imports of all books from the West were stopped for just half a dozen years. Edgar Allan Poe said about his stories that their 'terror is not of Germany but that of the soul.' What terrors of the soul have ever been experienced by a large majority of our so-called *avant garde* writers who are mostly white collar people for whom writing is a side-business? You can easily spot the label, 'Made in USA', or France or England on the books of many of them.

Our veneration for all that is foreign does not end here. It is, in fact, responsible for another curious phenomenon: Things Indian become instantly acceptable to us the moment they are accepted in foreign lands and then

we take to them because of their newly acquired prestige. Take the very simple instance of that article of men's wear—the Guru shirt: a garment which we in India have been using for the last so many years. But would an Indian have, on his own, ever thought of wearing a Guru shirt on Western trousers? A sartorial miscegenation of this kind would have provoked universal jeers on Indian streets. But one fine morning, the Guru shirt became the 'in' thing in the West and all our young men (and some who obstinately continued to believe they were still young) suddenly discovered the beauty of it. Curiously enough, we have treated Gurudev Tagore also in the same fashion. One remembers that before he was honoured in the West by the award of the Nobel prize, Tagore was often condemned by literary critics in his own language as a writer with an uncouth style, so much so that the story is told of a passage from Tagore being set in an examination paper for correction of stylistic errors. But once the stamp of foreign approval was registered, Tagore's reputation soared in India. Currently, the same thing is happening to one greater than Tagore—viz. Lord Krishna, who is now very much the rage in the United States, with the growth of the Hare Krishna cult, the followers of which shave their heads and proudly parade their shining domes through the city streets, singing bhajanas. We would not be surprised if our young men start doing the same in the near future, which would be welcome news to all Indian barbers, why, at the moment, are wearing long faces as they cast hungry glances at the forest of the long male hair all around them.

How can we really explain this wonderful Indian cult of the foreign? What really lies at the root of it? Perhaps a backward glance at Indian history might provide an answer. Centuries of subjugation by foreigners are perhaps responsible for the development of a deep-seated inferiority complex in our minds and our adoration of things foreign is only an outward manifestation of this inner malaise. Hence, with the British conquest, the Indian Babu began aping the Englishman, until, as Dr Radhakrishnan puts it, his 'soul became a brain, his voice an echo, his speech a quotation, and his free spirit a slave to things'. The dream of every young man was then to go to England and pass the ICS examination; and if, before his triumphant return and while pursuing his studies, he could, like the ancient Kacha, tempt a British Devayani to pursue him, he felt that he had reached the seventh heaven of happiness. The coming of Gandhiji no doubt changed all that, and the Swadeshi movement had more than merely economic or political significance. It was a bold assertion of the belief that the age-old Indian inferiority complex could be overcome. But today, the

imperatives of an affluence-oriented society are responsible for a regression to those bad old days.

But while laughing at the fascination which everything foreign exerts on the Indian mind, one thought should make us pause. Is it really the sole monopoly of the Indians? Actually, it is an almost universal phenomenon, as much oriental as occidental. More than two thousand years ago, we find the Roman poet Horace warning his countrymen, 'They change their sky and not their soul, who run across the seas'. The ancient Romans had a passion for Chinese silk and spent huge sums of money in importing it, a pound of silk being regarded as equivalent to a pound of gold. As Gibbon tells us, 'The most remote countries of the world were ransacked to supply the pomp and delicacy of Rome... Amber was brought overland from the shores of the Baltic to the Danube, and Barbarians were astonished at the price they received in exchange for so useless a commodity! As for the British, foreign travel was a must for fashionable Englishman during the Elizabethan age; hence, Shakespeare's ironic picture, in *The Merchant of Venice*, of the young fop who 'bought his doublet in Italy, his round hose in France, his bonnet in Germany and his behaviour everywhere! This British rage for travel continued later also and as Trevelyan, the social historian, points out, during the 18 and 19th centuries, 'the English milords (and all Englishmen were 'milords' to the foreign innkeeper) had almost the monopoly of foreign travel in Europe'. Today this monopoly has passed on to the American, in spite of Emerson's warning: 'The soul is no traveller; the wise men stays at home'. Every year, plane-loads of American tourists descend on foreign lands, armed with cameras to record their—what may be called 'Gullible's travels', and as Lin Yutang notes, they 'are so busy with their cameras that they have no time to look at the places themselves'. What Thoreau wrote of 19th century America is true today also: 'The Head Monkey at Paris puts on a traveller's cap and all the monkeys in America do the same.'

Thus, this mighty word, 'Foreign' casts its magic spell uniformly on orientals and occidentals alike, probably because it is, in the ultimate analysis, only an expression of the Romantic instinct, which is the same every where, whatever the colour of your skin. The cult of foreign things is only a manifestation of the eternal fascination which things unfamiliar and exotic have for the human mind. Your craving for imported things is essentially the same as the longing of the Romantic poet for 'the addition of strangeness to beauty.' The music you hear on your imported T.V. set is symbolically the music of "the horns of elfland faintly blowing."

□

POEMS

The Sum of Human Culture

The sum of human culture
from the travail of the species
through a billion years of evolving
is beginning to be discerned.

From mating families to Tribal factions
to hunt, hoard, compete and aggress
in search of food, shelter and wealth
mankind sprawled in many directions.

Peoples, races and nations,
sexes, colours and classes,
religions beliefs and languages,
reflected diverse ways and acts of life.

The individual ego was bloated to their groups
who fought, killed and conquered
to form empires and civilizations—
often not so civilized.

The establishments of Power,
of warriors and Brahmins,
capitalists and bureaucrats,
formed the dominant ruling class.

Masses of poor deprived folks
were doped and exploited
by greedy, cunning rulers
who also fought among themselves.

From the stink of greed and corruption,
ugly machinations of mind,
and perversions of religion
all civilizations decayed.

Now knowledge rules the roost,
and information is power;
new technologies are devised
to serve power's growing lust.

The monster of nuclear power
becoming deadlier and more monstrous
now threatens to destroy
by accident or design.

What looks like sure doom
of human kind and all life
may yet find response
from the mysterious human psyche;
for the hour of certain doom
and the threat of utter disaster
brings out the best in man
to survive, even to master.

To this faith of optimism
I do subscribe now,
but no messiah is in sight
and no miracle appears.

The sum of human culture
gathers and beckons at last
to a great leap of transcendence
from the tribal to the universal.

In this last stage of evolving
man will become mankind
and a new humanity will arise
from the diversity of cultures.

We shall live, sing and create
in the togetherness of humanity,
seek the sum of human culture,
guarding and nurturing precious identity.

The new culture of humanity
comprised of many-splendoured strands
of past identities and present striking
will fill the emerging future of man.

Control of mind and technology by the wisdom of the
spirit,
transforming desire and lust into creative work,
converting troubled possessive ego into ecstatic love,
pursuit of goodness, truth and beauty
for transcendence to perfection,
giving self and taking care of fellow-beings—
such are the trends to coming sum of culture
now rapidly embracing all human kind!

—Prem Kirpal

Hawk

I think you have me, immense wind!
You who will bend me as low
as you damn please—

Wrenching the well-entrenched thigh-bone
from its groove, and tossing it
in the eye of the irate sun

Or, then, bringing it down
so it fall any which way, smack
On the resentful, rebuffing globe.

Your cheeks puffed with a propellent
powerful enough to kill, you take me aback—
twisting my arm till sinew crack
like twig like branch like stick.

Immense wind, master of all who live
exposed on the face of a fleeing earth:—
unsettling rooted faiths in one fell swoop
and thrusting unknown seed thereat
in the gaping holes.

Your lung power huge,
whistling and howling you tear through
batteries of dreaded doctrines
spitting them out
in the world's ditches and drains.

As child, then youth, now man
I thought I had planted self foursquare
on firm ground, not counting
on your overhanging presence.

Down you will bear on me
and my presumptions in your hour of fury
carrying the refuse
from field to playing field
in a spree.

Immense, enormous King-Hawk
among small pretty breezes
taker of breath, and yielding up the dead—
to be or not to be
at your sweet will.

—Keshav Malik

What did I expect?

What, then, did I
Look for, on earth,
From sun and sky,
From bird and tree?

What hope to know, to see,
What treasure find,
What music, mystic rose,
What face,

Who every day have seen
Sky, sun, flower, leaf,
Rainbow and rain,
Faces, places,

Yet failed to recognize
The beyond-price
Heavenly glory
Lifelong before my eyes

Father, mother,
Children, friends, strangers
Have been good to me

For whom soon for ever
The light will fade
Of this epiphany.

—Kathleen Raine

The Kite

As blizzards
Budge
They thwart
And judge
The latent might
Of the
Soaring kite;

It just
May tumble
Down the lane
Or, brave
The blows
And zoom up
High!

—Vijay Raghav Rao

Flickers

white paper
in that dark tickling light
sound of a moving pen

a spider
moving alone
building tomorrows worlds

from the highest floor
i saw carlights pass
glowing like stars

fragments of
a crashed mirror
showed a brittle world

that typist clattering
on thought board
mistakes mistakes and mistakes

important moon
soon swoons
when sun glares

—Dwarkanath H. Kabadi

History of Art Series

(Mainly for Art Students)

Indian Painting—I

—MANOHAR KAUL

ART has nowhere been an accidental growth. With its roots embedded in the past, its development has always been through gradual process covering centuries of growth. Nowhere is this important aspect of tradition more insistent or more significant than in India; for, no country could escape less from its chequered past. Art in India has a continuous historical background which has influenced Indian life and outlook from time immemorial and whose traditions are still alive.

The researches carried out in the present century in the sphere of ancient Indian civilisation and culture have revealed the wonderful panorama of past and these discoveries have given the lie direct to the sweeping statements of a few Western savants that the art of painting was unknown in India and that Indians lacked aesthetic sense. These opinions were put forth towards the end of the 19th century when little or no proof was known to have been in existence about the painting records in the country. The discovery of a few remnants of painting in certain caves, temples, and ancient institutions and various references in Indian classics show, beyond any doubt, that India had rich and valuable traditions in painting as also in sculpture, architecture, music, dance and literature. The study of these specimens, some of which are now in a faded condition, enables us to form some idea about the technique, styles and purposes which inspired the art of painting during the different epochs of India's long history, although some aspects of it still remain a mystery; to solve which more intensive research is needed.

Archaeological findings in Mohenjodaro and Harappa have yielded a system of "sign manuals" and "pictorial language" that was in vogue as early as 3000 B.C. Even traces of paintings belonging to a period earlier than this have been found in some caves in the Kaimur ranges of Central India. Certain patterns of drawings belonging to the later Stone Age have been found in the Vindhya hills. Definitely authentic remains

of painting depicting animal life and hunting scenes in red pigment, belonging to some remote antiquity, have been discovered in the vicinity of a village called Singhanpur in Raigarh. The drawings therein of animal life are realistic and natural; the vigour and dynamic action, clearly discernible in the hunting scenes, indicate a highly developed artistic sense and skill for graphic expression. Some interesting paintings and drawings mostly depicting hunting scenes in black, red and brown, found in some caves in the Mirzapur District, are comparable to the "famous rock-sheltered paintings of Cogul in Spain, said to be the work of Aurignacian man of many thousand years ago." These paintings are almost dateless. The frescoes of Jogimara caves in Sirguja can safely be placed in the 1st century B.C. Percy Brown's assumption, that these frescoes indicate the crude attempts to express certain forms of life and nature, ignores the patent fact of the ravages of time which must have distorted their original shape. Nor is the assumption that the artistic standards had not attained perfection in those times valid. Painting in India must have been in an advanced stage of development long before the Christian era to make possible the magnificent frescoes of Ajanta in the subsequent Buddhist period. Perfection of technique, boldness in style and other characteristics noticeable in the Ajanta frescoes clearly indicate a very high standard of technical skill attained in India several millennia before. This view is corroborated by several notices found in various classics and epics.

Valmiki's *Ramayana* refers to the making of the image of Sita to be used as a substitute in her absence at the time of Rama's *Ashvamedha Yajna* (circa 1000-600 B.C.) which was to be celebrated in specially painted halls. *Mahabharata* relates the interesting story of Chitrlekha, the maid of Usha, drawing portraits of all the contemporary young princes in order to help the young princess to recognise her lover, Aniruddha, the grandson of Lord Krishna, whom she had seen for the

first time in a dream. There are many notices about the art of painting in the Buddhist Jataka stories (circa 600-500 B.C.). In the *Vinaya Pithak*, a Pali Buddhist work (3rd or 4th century B.C.), we come across a notice of the grand picture halls of King Pasenada decorated with painted portraits, figures and patterns. There is a mention of mural paintings on the walls of "relic chamber of the Ruwanveli degaba" (circa 150 B.C. in the Ceylonese history. *Mahavamsa*). Bhasa's play, *Swapna-vasavadatta* (circa 300 A.D.) also mentions the King's portrait. Old treatises on art like *Silpa Shastra*, *Chitra Lakhshana* and *Silpa Ratna* (circa 500-600 A.D.) allot definite chapters to painting as one of the fine arts pursued in those times. King Dushyanta, in Kalidasa's *Shukuntala*, draws a portrait of his heroine from memory, while Rama and Sita are presented with the newly executed painted scenes of their life in exile in Bhavabhuti's *Uttaramacharitam* (circa 600 A.D.). These notices, incidentally, show that portrait painting or drawing from memory was commonly practised in ancient India, and that painting was a noble art learnt even by kings and nobles besides, of course, the professional painters.

Heinrich Zimmer maintains that in ancient India kings got built up big public picture halls, the walls and ceilings of which were decorated with paintings and murals. These served for the diversion or the edification of their subjects. He is also of the opinion that such extensive painting operations were carried out by whole families of painters, who formed themselves into a guild, showing thereby that each member of the family or guild was a hereditary painter and a consummate artist. This view is corroborated by an old Jaina story. A certain king, Jiyasathu, is said to have employed the whole guild of painters to paint a fairly large picture hall, assigning a portion to each family. It so happened on a certain occasion that the daughter of an old painter, carrying her father's meals, had to wait till he was free from work. In order to while away the time, the daughter painted a peacock's feather in the paved floor. It was so life-like that the king, who had gone there to inspect the work, mistook it for the real thing, and stooping to pick it up only spoiled his finger nails.

Taranath, the Tibetan historian of the 17th century, has classified the Indian painting of early times into three styles—*Deva*, *Yaksha* and *Naga*—associated with three different regions and epochs. The *Deva* style was in vogue in Magdha, Uttar Pradesh, during 600 to 300 B.C., *Yaksha* in the domain of Asoka in 300 B.C., and *Naga* in eastern countries and Bengal during 300 A.D. onwards. Vatsyayana (circa 300 A.D.) in his *Kamasutra*, gives a fairly comprehensive account of painting as a fine art, and not only lays down its six canons but also provides technical information about painting materials

such as drawing panels, paints, pigments, brushes, parchments and the like. These six canons (*shadanga*) he had taken from some earlier works, now extinct. *Shadanga* literally means six limbs. Figuratively it means six laws or principles governing the treatment of painting in general. These are:

1) *Rupabheda* which means dissimilitude in manifest form. It is the principle of physical and mental insight into the distinguishing marks in the outward look or aspect of a natural object. This differentia in outward aspect of an object in nature varies according to the light at different times of the day or at different seasons as it is seen by the physical eye. It also varies according to the light of the mental eye of the artist, which characterises the object as beautiful or ugly as it reacts favourably or unfavourably upon his consciousness. Mere seeing or sensuous reaction alone is not sufficient for practising the art of painting. It is the mental light of the artist that transfigures the object or form and finally determines it worthy as a subject for painting or otherwise.

2) *Pramanani* or *Pramanam* are the laws governing the correct measure, exact proportion, perspective, structure, anatomy, distance, foreshortening, volume, third dimension, foreground, background, vanishing point, spacing, colour scheme, movement or immobility of objects, sense to select or reject and the like. This measuring faculty is to be developed by the artist before he actually practises the art.

3) *Bhava* is the physical expression of form assumed under the stress of feeling, emotion or sentiment as a reaction to some mental stimulus, event, circumstance or incident. This *Bhava* is sometimes also represented by suggestive symbols to indicate the circumstantial condition of the subject. This may be the result of the emotional action in the subject itself, which the artist understands through his mental power of discernment and reproduces on the canvas, or it may be the result of feeling in the artist himself that may give expression to the subject of his painting.

4) *Lavanya Yojanam* is infusing of grace and artistic quality into the subject. This is the law of transforming the form so as to endow it with added aesthetic quality. In modern parlance, it is called the law of distortion or contortion so as to make the form look more beautiful than it actually is. Also this law teaches how to eliminate ugly or unnecessary elements in the form and only present such aspects as have aesthetic value. This law also regulates the reaction of *Bhava* in order to enhance beauty and avoid ugliness.

5) *Sadrisyam* denotes similitude, resemblance or correspondence of form with feelings or ideas. In painting when lines and colours answer to what the mind sees and experiences we get what is called similitude.

6) *Varnika-Bhanga* is skill in using the brush and knowledge of colour mixtures and pigments.

These fundamental principles of pictorial art had originated in India long before the Christian era as Vatsyayana (circa 300 A.D.) had got them from his predecessors. This shows that the pictorial art was a well established career or pursuit in well defined guilds throughout the country and one of the humanities in the educational curriculum of the elite, the gentry and the ruling hierarchy.

Hsieh Ho, a Chinese scholar of the 6th century A.D., refers to six canons of painting followed by artists in China. These are just similar to those of India, and as these obtained in China at a later date, it is probable that they might have been borrowed from India. There is also reason to believe that these principles of painting were borrowed even by the Western world where their practical application is already discernible in much of their classical art. Moreover the traditional, and not the academic, principles of painting in the West are definitely akin, to a certain extent, to those of Indian origin and this fact lends support to the assumption of those who hold that the former were originally derived from the latter. The Indian canons, as already pointed out, are anterior to those of China and the European canons are posterior and it is possible that the latter borrowed them from India directly through Arabia or indirectly through China due to the cultural and commercial contacts that existed in ancient times. Parallel developments of these principles in all the three regions of the world—India, China and Europe—is also a possibility, but the different epochs during which they prevailed in each region belie that possibility and point strongly to the cultural contacts between them.

Chitralakshana, is another treatise of remote antiquity which expounds in detail the theories of Indian painting with special emphasis on the technique and laws governing the pictorial representation of human figures and those of gods and deities. This treatise seeks to show the important position the art of painting enjoyed in social and cultural life in ancient India. *Silpa Shastra*, *Silpa Ratna* and a few other treatises referred to above, of later date, govern the subsequent development of Indian art. These works deal mainly with both the basic principles and technical details regarding architecture, sculpture, painting and other minor arts.

The history of art in India clearly shows that it followed settled aesthetic ideals. European art forms are based on ancient Greek cultures which never went beyond the intellect. The Greek aesthetic ideal was human perfection in which man is endowed with keen intellect, perfect sense of beauty and of the body beautiful—all the three being in harmonious development. Apollo was considered the embodiment of that perfection.

Round this ideal of human perfection the Greeks created their philosophy, sciences and arts.

In India the whole fabric of life and art from ancient times to the present day stands on the solid foundation of faith. There is not an aspect of Indian life or activity that has not a spiritual background of an enduring value. The Indian thinker had discovered a lasting essence—a sort of a compound of truth, joy and knowledge—which persists unchanged and forms the background of this universal flux. To know and to be that essence was declared to be the highest good and the ultimate purpose of life. This highest good is a subjective experience attained through single-minded devotion and one-pointed attention to a point where the knower and the known are both lost and shine as one integrated whole. Work of any sort in Indian life meant worship and worship culminated in the identity of the worker with the work. This state of mind is called intuitive understanding, a sort of apperception in which the thinker obtains a perfect knowledge of his thought in its idealised form. This intuitive understanding forms the basic principle in the theory of Indian art and aesthetics. In the creation of a perfect piece of art perfect meditation is the essential prerequisite before it can be translated into plastic or colour form, symphony or poem. The Indian artist always submitted himself to discipline and moral life and seldom worked before a model. There was nothing external for him. The model was his creative inner intuition with which he had identified himself and the created external piece of art was but an expression of the inner vision. In a sense the ancient Indian art may well be classed as an expressionist school of an ideal type quite distinct from the expressionist school of Benedetto Croce's description. Unlike ancient European art, based on Greek art conceptions, the Indian art always concentrated on superior ideals of beauty and perfection. Comparing Greek art with Indian art Sir John Marshall says:

"Hellenistic art never took real and lasting hold upon India for the reason that the temperaments of the two peoples were radically dissimilar. To the Greek, man, man's beauty, man's intellect were everything and it was the apotheosis of this beauty and this intellect which still remains the keynote of Hellenistic art even in the Orient. But these ideals awakened no response in the Indian mind. The vision of the Indian was bounded by the immortal rather than the mortal, by the infinite rather than the finite. Where the Greek thought was ethical, his was spiritual; where the Greek was rational, his was emotional. And to these aspirations, these more spiritual instincts, he sought, at a later date, to give articulate expression by translating them into terms of form and colour."

Though the European culture is basically Hellenistic,

the concept of art evolved *mutatis mutandis* the evolution of the Christian religious outlook from the 6th to the 18th century. During the period 550-1150 A.D., art had no purpose other than the service of God. It was solely an ecclesiastical art, in which the themes were not of this world. Hosts of angels, and demons,—virtue and vice—warfare between them, and the triumph of the former, God as inexorable judge before whom everybody trembled—all such concepts of primitive Christianity formed the subject matter for artists to depict. Here man and his life had no place in art. He was a sinner. In the era 1150-1470 A.D., God is the incarnate Redeemer, the God of religion in the new religious spirit, in which love brings God and man in close relationship, and Christ is regarded in “His Exalted Humanity” with the Blessed Lady and the Saints. Along with these holy and spiritual aspects art in this reformed religious outlook also comprehends both man and nature in all their aspects and relations together with human beauty and “downright ugliness.” In this age the picture became an organic whole—a sort of microcosm, a life-like, three-dimensional entity in space and time, though drawn on two dimensional canvas. Art flowered in devotional pictures where holiness is delineated in close proximity to man and nature, and in this manner ecclesiastical art continued to crumble and disappear, yielding place even to purely secular art free from sacred themes.

Between 1470 to 1750 A.D., man gets exalted halfway to the divine in the religious art of the period. He is not only created in the image of God but is also a reflection of His glory both in likeness and in creative power. Christ is shown transfigured and glorious as well as physically perfect. Heaven and earth come closer to each other along with man’s triumphal progress upwards to light and glory. The artist now depicts God-like man in “the best of all possible worlds” in every state, mood and condition along with the “vital Christian spirit”. In this phase European art had come close to the ancient Greek ideal, when it was at its finest. But

this motif was soon to disappear in the next or modern phase. The Christian religious motif was the main driving force in the European art activity during the three aforementioned epochs, while the second and third epochs have got the common distinction of evolving the concept of human personality in God and raising man to near divine status when art ministered both to the sacred and profane needs of the social order.

With the emergence of Romanticism, democratic liberalism and scientific agnosticism during the last and the present century, the concept of art in Europe has been receding even from the Greek ideal and entering the nebulous region of illusory indefiniteness based on the individual craze for being original. This dreamy hallucination has no affinity either with nature or with man and least of all with the spirit that permeates and transcends both. Unlike these wild and bizarre art trends in Europe, the Indian ideal of pictorial art has remained true to the basic concepts of nature and man. Nature plays an important role in the affairs of man who is also regarded as part of it. The association of man with the forms of nature was as indispensable in Indian art as transcending them both in spontaneous expression dictated by intuition. The Indian ideal in art had been a harmonious blend of spirit and matter, spiritual concept visualised in concrete form, faithful to nature yet transcending it. The one tempers and tones the other but is never represented in isolation. This art ideal is in conformity with the Universal law of creation which is but an interplay of spirit and matter. It is not blind copying of nature but creation of nature and form out of the creative power of man’s own personality. The artist’s emotive and inner intuition is the basic factor in the Indian art ideal. He first assimilates all that comes from without and then creates from within. It is the spiritual content of Indian art that has made it enduring. This ideal is both assimilative and creative and never imitative or indefinite.

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Book-Reviews

INDIAN HERITAGE: ed. Vasanti Muzumdar (Bombay: Indian Council for Social Welfare, 176 pp. and 138 plates; price unstated).

EDGAR Allan Poe has sung of 'the glory that was Greece. And the grandeur that was Rome'. But 'the wonder that was India' has proved to be superior to both these at least in one respect: Old Zeus and Jupiter have now been irretrievably buried in the pages of the bulky Classical Encyclopaedia, but old Vishnu and Shiva are still very much alive and in fact continue to shape the lives of millions of people.

How do we explain this apparently baffling phenomenon? The answer is to be found in the innate, inexhaustible vitality and resilience of Indian culture, which has changed much over the centuries, has lost much in the process, has suffered some inevitable damage and even decay; but, at the same time, has, in spite of all this, always shown, throughout its long history an astonishing capacity for adaptation and assimilation, resurgence and survival. The upshot is that rare spectacle: a civilization unrivalled for its unbroken continuity over millenia, so that the better Indian can say today with justifiable pride, 'It has taken five thousand years and more to make me'.

The story of Indian civilization has been ably told several time in the past by outstanding scholars and writers like A.L. Basham, Louis Renou, Radha Kamal Mukherji, Jawaharlal Nehru and others. But like all classic narratives it remains a story which can be always retold with pleasure and profit—especially when it is well-told. *Indian Heritage* is certainly a book which can qualify for this description, for it is a collection happily marked by a high quality of content, choice of contributors and presentation. The volume comprises 27 articles on various aspects of Indian culture, ranging from archaeology to astrology, art to astronomy, mythology to music, law to literature, tribal life to textiles and flora to food.

A major strength of the volume lies in that in most cases the choice of the contributors could hardly be bettered. Almost every article is by a recognized authority in that particular field, with the result that the presentation, in most cases, carries that stamp of authority which is the fortunate end-product of a happy meeting between the right mind and the right subject. Thus, Dr Sankalia writes on archaeology, and Dr Mulk Raj Anand on Sculpture. And while Sambhaji Kadam traces the

origin of the visual arts in ancient Indian culture Dnyaneshwar Nadkarni offers a contemporary view on them. In fact, it is a pleasant experience to find that the names that most obviously come in mind when one thinks of certain aspects of Indian culture are almost invariably to be encountered in the collection: so we find Ashok Ranade writing on Indian music, Kanak Rele on Indian Dance, Kamaladevi Chattopadhyaya on Handicrafts, Vasantkumar Pandit on Astrology and Astronomy, S.D. Gokhale on Social Welfare, and Bunny Reuben on the Indian Cinema.

However, when a recognized expert tackles a subject, the danger is sometimes that his very expertise can paradoxically enough become a handicap; for he knows so much that he cannot always make his presentation appealing to the common reader, the temptation to unload all his learning or address himself to fellow-experts alone being always within beckoning distance. One is happy to note that most of the contributors here have successfully withstood this temptation, so that their presentation is uncomplicated enough to appeal to the common reader, without falling into the opposite trap of over-simplification. In fact, some of the essays offer interesting facts which the common reader is not likely to be familiar with: e.g. that ancient Hindu Law recognizes 12 different kinds of sons, including 'Datrima' (given), 'Kritrima' (made), 'Gadhaja' (born secretly) etc., and that there are more than 2100 species of Birds and 500 species of Mammals, over 1700 species of Fishes and about 13000 species of plants in the Indian sub-continent.

Another commendable feature of this Volume is that it contains not less than 138 plates on art paper by way of illustrations and even a lay-man will notice that they have been chosen with care and discrimination. Many major triumphs of Indian art are represented here, including Ajanta and Elephanta, Konarak and Khajuraho, Belur and Sarnath. These plates have certainly enhanced the beauty and worth of this Volume.

On the debit side, one notices a few glaring lacunas in the choice of subjects. Surely, any putatively representative presentation of the Indian heritage must have adequate room for a consideration of Indian thought in the vital spheres of Science (only astronomy is included here), Politics, Economics and Education. A collection which can find space even for handicrafts and Rangavali, could certainly have provided some pages for a consideration of Kautilya and Gandhiji (as a political thinker),

KALA DARSHAN

Charaka and Shustruta, and the great teachers like Nagarjuna and Shantarakshita at the ancient Indian Universities of Nalanda, Takshashila and others. Similarly, literature has received rather step-motherly treatment, since the essay devoted to it confines its attention mostly to classical literature. A separate essay on literatures in the modern Indian languages would have been welcome. Again, the production values of the Volume are, on the whole, excellent (the paper and the binding are unimpeachable) but the two-page Errata at the end tells its own story; and unfortunately, it is an incomplete story, for some printing errors seem to have gone unnoticed (e.g. 'slylised' for 'stylised', p. 26, etc.). There is no Index either.

These few limitations apart, *Indian Heritage* remains a valuable collection. The richness of its content is ably matched by the beautiful plates and the elegant jacket designed by the editor herself deserves special mention. Altogether, this is a book to cherish and dip into, especially at a time like now, when the Indian present looks so uninviting and the future none too luminous, so that the only 'flattering function' one can lay to one's soul remains the contemplation of the glories of the past. It is a Volume which can grace the library shelf and adorn the drawing room; ably filling the role of an excellent bedside book.

M.K. NAIK

RYE ON THE RAVINES (poems)

By Dr. Dwarkanath H. Kabadi

Poets International Organisation, Bangalore.

161 pp. Price: Rs. 45/-

In some ways this volume of haiku-like-poems, sub-titled 'flickers', is a feat. About one hundred and fifty pages of sustained verse will not be hazarded by

everyone; it could be exhausting as well as risky. While long poems are still being penned, the poetry readers attention is drawn to brevity—given that far too much is clamouring for notice all twentyfour hours of the day. The reader, at least the average one, would not like to miss out on information, on events, and one the great public debates. For these and other reasons poems, and particularly book sized ones, may well bring gloom even in the otherwise reverent. The honours that poetry receives are too often ceremonial or symbolic ones. The 'real' excitement would seem to lie in the real chaos called the world. That being so, Dr. Kabadi's marathon may well scare people off the track.

However, at least this reader has enjoyed the verbal run, for one thing Dr. Kabadi is snappy, fast paced. Its the sort of genre wherein you do not really have to linger—the current carries you along swiftly, the scenery as excitingly blurred as in a joy ride. So accelerated is the speed, that you do not wait to linger over the separate, disparate situations; nor have you the breathing space to be overly critical for any poeiming seeming linguistic or other similar lapse (after all even the most unanimously established of poetic works throw up a few doubts). Certainly Dr. Kabadi had a facility with his flickers. The form is novel, and the content crisply drawn:

Mad hurrying car
Speeding there...far...afar
to attend a funeral?

or

wind on his rubber heels
runs fast
in that flying house

Well, here is a breeziness of manner, which even though it is not the same thing as a descent into the depths, is free of verse fatigue. It is fun all the way.

—K.M.

AIFACS Awards

All India Fine Arts and Crafts Society has announced Awards of Titles of KALA RATNA, KALA VIBHUSHAN and KALA SHRI to the renowned artists and art critics and to those who have actively helped the Society in its laudable activities during the last sixty years. The list of names is as under:

KALA RATNA (With a cash award of Rs. 10,000/-)

1. Dr. B.P. Pal
2. Sardar Gurcharan Singh
3. K.K. Nair (Krishna Chaitanya)
4. Bimal Das Gupta
5. Jagmohan Chopra
6. Dr. M.S. Randhawa (Posthumous)
7. Biswanath Mukerjee (Posthumous)

KALA VIBHUSHAN (with a cash award of Rs. 5,000/-)

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3. Manohar Kaul
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5. Damyanti Chawla
6. N.S. Bisht
7. Ms. Anupam Sood

KALA SHRI (with a cash award of Rs. 2,500/-)

1. Paramjit Singh
2. V.S. Rahi
3. K.L. Rangeen
4. O.P. Gulati
5. Ms. Prakash Narula
6. Hariram Hirandani

S. S. BHAGAT
Secretary, AIFACS, New Delhi

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